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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
Department of Political and Social Sciences

**The Making of Political Ambition:
A Study of Top Activists in
Italian Party Youth Organizations**

by
Ettore Recchi

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the
Degree of Doctor of the European University Institute

Florence, June 1996

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EXAMINING JURY:

Prof. Stefano Bartolini (EUI)
Prof. Jean Blondel (EUI, supervisor)
Prof. Geraint Parry (University of Manchester)
Prof. Antonio Schizzerotto (Università di Trento)
Prof. Yossi Shavit (EUI, co-supervisor)

Florence, June 1996

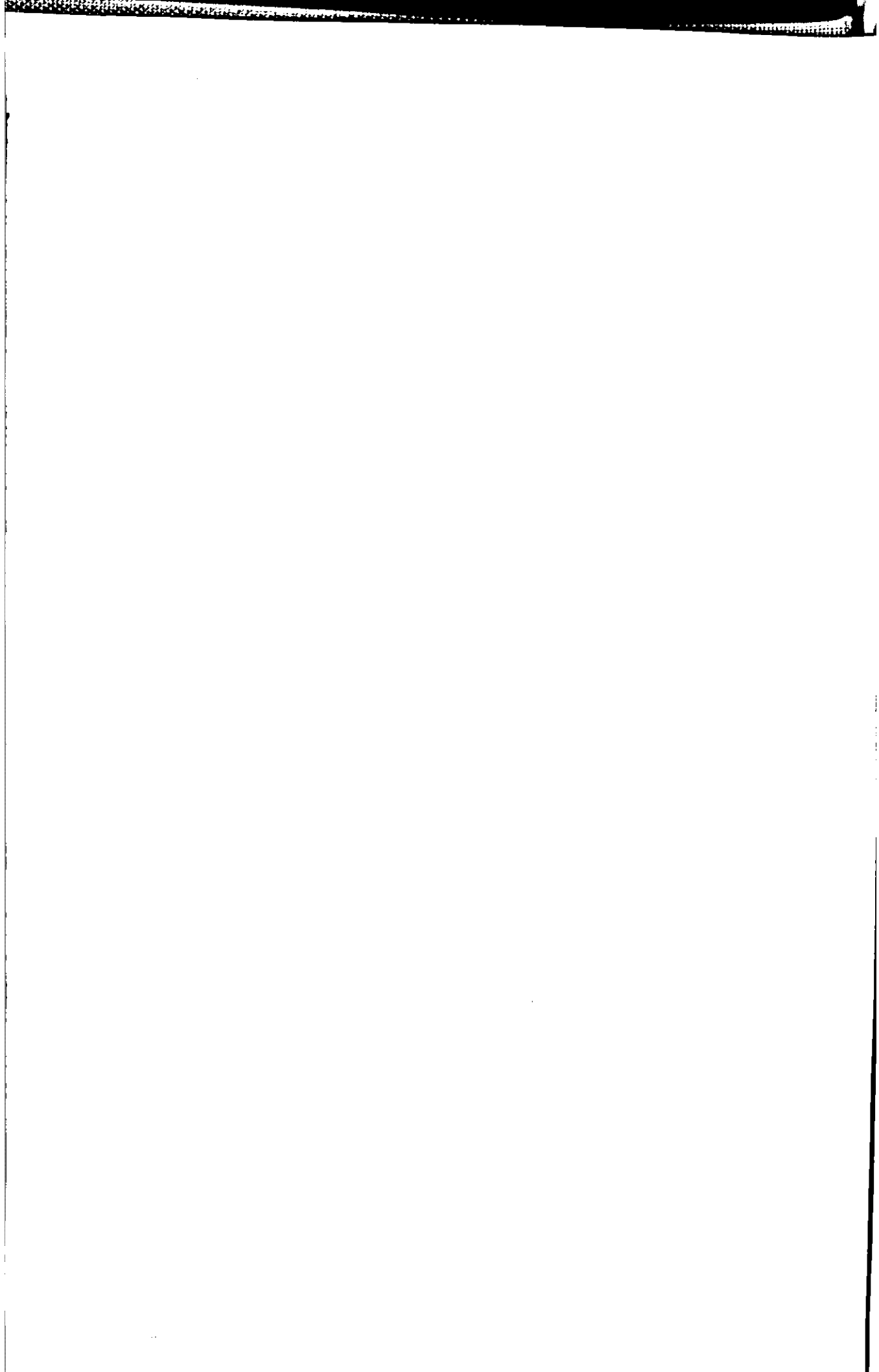


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My wife Sisi must be credited with making this research always reside nearby and never between us.

Florence, April 1996

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«Serious consideration of this choice [of a profession] is certainly the first duty of a young man who is beginning his career and does not want to leave his most important affairs to chance. [Yet,] we cannot always attain the position to which we believe we are called; our relations in society have to some extent already begun to be established before we are in a position to determine them»

(K. Marx, *Reflections of a Young Man on the Choice of a Profession*, written in 1835, in K. Marx - F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975, vol. I, pp. 3-4)

«Every type of social order, without exception, must, if one wishes to evaluate it, be examined with reference to the opportunities which it affords to certain types of persons to rise to positions of superiority through the operation of the various objective and subjective selective factors»

(M. Weber, *The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics*, written in 1913, in M. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Free Press, Glencoe, 1949, p. 27)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Theoretical Puzzle: Taking Politics as a Career

If «career politicians have become a fashionable bogey, to be condemned, deplored and curbed» (Riddell 1995, 186) in all contemporary Western societies, nowhere is this more evident than in Italy in the first half of the 1990s, where the reaction against career politicians has given a decisive push to the break-up of the existing political system. This anti-politician sentiment is particularly widespread among the Italian youth, who show less interest in politics than their peers all around Europe (cf. chapter 4, § 1). Few of them participate in political activities. Still fewer of them aspire to a political career and the necessary apprenticeship which may qualify them for political office.

Few, however, does not mean none. What about those young people who have such aspirations? Why do they have them? These questions go beyond mere curiosity, since the bulk of top-ranking politicians is drawn from the relatively limited pool of the young and ambitious who have paved their way to political success much earlier. Even at a time when career politics is the object of mass resentment in Italy, the most important party leaders of the Left and the Right have first experienced leadership in the youth organizations of their parties. From there they have progressively moved up the vertical ladder of party offices.

On the whole, «political professionals» remain the biggest occupational group among Italian MPs of the "Second Republic: they constitute almost one third of the total. This seems to mean that under the short-term process of «elite circulation» lies a long-term trend: the professionalization of political representation. As social differentiation proceeds, political activities tend to require full-time commitment and specialized personnel¹. Consequently, political systems need to attract career-minded individuals, for whom the ambition of attaining political office is as fundamental as the desire of a salary is to the normal aspirant employee. But if it is important to know why a certain employee knocked on a given firm's door (in fact, the supply side of labour markets is extensively researched), to know why some young individuals choose a political career is no less important.

Practically no research has taken the problem into serious consideration until now. What pushes some youth to be active in politics with a perspective of professionalization? What makes them politically ambitious? More operationally, *is it possible to predict which young individuals are more likely to embark upon a political career?*

The present study seeks to answer this question. Its implications are far-reaching. By contrast with other types of regimes, democracy functions due to self-selected

¹ As Lagroye (1991, 223) observes, «la professionnalisation politique participe de l'extension d'une catégorie de "professionnels de la représentation" dans les sociétés contemporaines».

individuals who decide to run for political office. Understanding the process by which these individuals come forward is crucial to coming to terms with how real democracies work. Does self-selection reflect the special motivation and "taste" for politics of some random citizens? Or does it reflect the control of distinct resources which are out of reach of the bulk of people? If the latter is the case, discrimination primarily operates - in a subtle but most effective way - by discouraging the possible political aspirations of persons who do not possess such resources. This is clearly at odds with the principle that democratic regimes entail equal opportunities for all to take part in political life; and it may also deprive the polity of many potential good politicians who lack only the resources to start.

Furthermore, the degree of openness of political recruitment affects the legitimacy of political systems. If those that are eligible belong to a restricted stratum of persons, political alienation may become widespread and public control of governing elites may be weakened. Instead, if the roots of political ambition are socially dispersed, the democratic tree is likely to grow stronger.

2. *The Methodological Premise: Rediscovering Individuals in Political Analysis*

But is it worthwhile to study politicians? Some argue that it is not, given that whether or not political actors matter cannot be proved. As a consequence, individuals are

played down in some research approaches - such as institutionalism and radical structuralism. Marxists like Poulantzas (1978, 62; also 74, 124-5, 129), for instance, define individual agents as nothing more than "personifications" of Wage-Labour and Capital», that is as «supports or bearers of an ensemble of structures» which are the only real forces behind events². "Old" and "new" institutionalism, albeit to a lesser extent, demonstrate the same tendency to remove concrete individuals from the picture. The stress on the «ubiquity of routines» and the advocacy to «see action - including action in politically important and novel situations - as instituzionalized through structures of rules and routines» leads them to conclude that fundamentally «political actors are driven by institutional duties and roles» (March-Olsen 1989, 24, 23, 159). This approach proposes the same conception of political research which was well established at the beginning of the twentieth century, when «it was not considered necessary to discuss the politician. Occasionally he was mentioned in a dim sort of way, but always as if he were an intruder who did not fit in and was soon destined to disappear. [...] Textbooks on politics maintained a splendid isolation from the haunts and manners of the politician» (Lippmann 1922, cit. in Eulau 1969, 371).

² However, marxists who are more sensitive to Marx's early writings contest this vision (cf. Miliband 1970).

This is not to deny that «structures» and «institutions» are influential factors³. Structures and institutions do influence events, but this occurs first of all by influencing individual expectations and behaviour. Individuals, not abstract entities, affect reality *prima facie*. Hence, focusing on the individual mediation of social forces brings us one step closer to the explanation of events and can reveal the effective conditions of human choices. Such a methodological rationale lies behind this empirical study.

3. The Empirical Problem: Explaining the Political Ambition of Youth

This research is about political ambition. Despite popular disapproval, ambition is not a pathology of political systems. On the contrary, it is necessary in every society. It provides a supply of political actors needed to maintain a structure of political roles. Were these actors not to exist, the polity would dissolve. More realistically, democratic representation hinges on ambition, since «without the politician's ambition driving him or her to capture and hold a congressional seat, the public's mandate loses its

³ As Whitmeyer (1994) argues, the claim that the actor is «foundational of social structure» is not incompatible with a structural analysis of those opportunities and constraints in which individual action is embedded.

force and its withdrawal holds no threat» (Fowler-McClure 1989, 238)⁴.

As will be pointed out in chapter II, demand and supply of political personnel interact in such a way that only people in particular "positions of departure" become legitimate candidates for further political advancements. Seeking to fill these positions, individuals who aim and «prepare to play active political roles usually become differentiated at an early age from their more passive contemporaries» (Lasswell 1965, 21)⁵.

More precisely, the most vigorous «sifting and sorting of the general population until a relative handful from each generation is left to hold office» (Prewitt 1970, 57-8) takes place when the would-be politicians choose to become active as incumbents of some role which political recruiters consider as an apprenticeship, while their age peers stay aloof. These apprenticeships can be identified

⁴ On the other hand, ambition is as necessary as it is dangerous. Democracy needs people ambitious enough to commit themselves to striving for political power, and modest enough to agree to legal rules and rule-based defeats. This concern led *The Federalist* (1981, 160) to propose the constitutional separation of powers as a device that makes «ambition counteract ambition» and thereby prevents the emergence of hegemonic aspirations.

⁵ Generational and demographic constraints can alter the chances of promotion in some circumstances, delaying the entry of ambitious young individuals or discouraging them. On the one hand, exceptional phenomena of mobilization may yield a surplus of political aspirants as a side-effect. Thus, after a revolution or prolonged uprising there is always a problem of re-allocating former full-time activists to different occupations. Failure to do so can produce threats to the social order - such as terrorism, as in Italy in the 1970s. On the other hand, even in normal times the demographic phenomenon of the extension of active life can slacken new recruits' careers. As a matter of fact, in contemporary Western societies «the age at which inheritances of positions are handed on is getting later and later and the juniors of the dominant class are champing at the bit» (Bourdieu 1993, 101).

retrospectively, by exploring where the careers of current political elites actually began. This information is important in order to «locate the men to whom it is reasonable and appropriate to assign ambitions for these offices» (Schlesinger 1966, 195).

In any case, political ambition turns out to be unequally distributed among social actors. The second part of chapter II contains a review of the competing explanations of why some people join political groups and become full-time activists, and others do not. These explanations focus either on psychological configurations or social conditions (cf. *infra*).

In chapter III the object of the empirical analysis is introduced. The early career paths of the Italian MPs of the 1992-1994 legislature are scrutinized to find the most common "entry points". Data show that the bulk of the older generation of Italian leaders had begun their careers at the head of party youth organizations. Therefore, at the beginning of the 1990s in Italy, a leadership office in the youth organizations of the main parties was regarded as a highly common stepping-stone to political power. At that time, youth parties were where politically ambitious young people *had* to be. By being admitted to such an elite breeding ground, ambitious youths were assured of an opportunity to be considered for a successful career in the political world.

This is why the top cadres of the party youth organizations have been selected as the object of fieldwork. While their age peers set their sights on more conventional

career plans, these individuals chose to devote most of their time and energies to political activism in a party structure. Charged with some leadership responsibilities, they were (and, most of all, *imagined to be*) natural candidates for replacing senior leaders. They formed the core of a «reserve political class». They were the would-be career politicians *par excellence*.

Chapters IV to VII compare a sample of 115 leading activists of the main party youth organizations to a control group of 322 nonactivists of the same age cohort in Italy⁶. Given their promising positions in the party structure, young activists - all under 30 years of age - embody political ambition at an early stage. Inasmuch as the analysis is carried out shortly after their decision to engage in full-time militancy, studying them is expected to shed light on the sources of political ambitions more directly than is usually done by drawing from memoirs, biographies, and historical records of adult leaders.

While designing the inquiry, the concern was to gather - through structured interviews - data about three main groups of factors: personality traits, social origins, and social networks. On the one hand, psychological theories hold that the aptitude to enter politics stems from some alterations of the normal personality at an earlier stage of the lifecourse. Politics repairs such abnormalities, or gives expression to the value orientations which are associated with them. On the other hand, sociological

⁶ Details of the sampling procedures are given in chapter IV, § 2.

accounts underscore the influence of belonging to certain social categories (e.g., male, upper class, and so on). These accounts tend to assume that people with specific attributes are subject to specific processes of socialization or intergenerational transmission that induce them into politics. By contrast with this kind of explanation, finally, socio-structural theories contend that, especially in contemporary societies characterized by a fragmentation of class cultures and lifestyles⁷, personal attributes are likely to be poor indicators of individual dispositions. These are seen rather as depending on some aspects of the social networks in which the individual is embedded. From a socio-structural standpoint, political ambition would be spurred by particular configurations of these networks - notably, the existence of strong ties with long-standing activists.

Chapters V, VI, and VII analyze the explanatory power of these three types of independent factors in the context of this study (table 1). In chapter VIII, lastly, the main models that can be reconstructed on the basis of the literature are contrasted with a new model. In a nutshell, this model seeks to focus on the circumstances that make the price of political ambition seem high to some people and advantageous to others. Evidence proves that the perspective of a career involvement in politics reflects a particular configuration in the structure of capital distribution at

⁷ Evidence contained in Ester et al. (1993a) provides a convincing picture of this process in economically advanced Western countries.

the micro level; yet, capital is to be taken as a more multi-faceted object than in Marxism and the "interest" leading to political involvement not as an action to defend a merely economic integrity.

Table 1: Plan of the empirical study

Explanandum	Explanans	Chapter
<i>Political Ambition</i>	Adolescent Deprivations Value Orientations	V
	Social Position (background factors)	VI
	Social Position (network factors)	VII
	Integrated Model	VIII

4. Themes and Levels of Inquiry

This research can be read on three levels. First, it is an empirical description of young party activists in the context of the transition from the so called "First" to the "Second" Republic in Italy. The picture portrays the supply lines of an army dismantled soon afterwards - i.e., the Italian political class. Although we cannot know whether these reserves will ever reach the front, they were the specimen of the aspirants to a political career in a political system which many viewed as a prototypical *partitocrazia*. As such, the inquiry may interest students of recruitment, parties, and Italian politics in general.

Second, as democracies rely more than other regimes on the self-selection of their political personnel, accounting for how this selection originates in a concrete case can be seen as a contribution to democratic theory. In particular, the study addresses the question of whether there are factors which restrict the pool of prospective politicians from an early age, and thus predefine - at the risk of systematically excluding some talents - the "human material" from which voters then choose their leaders.

Third, as it seeks to understand what makes young adults enter a given career line, this investigation may also offer some insights into the process of reproduction of social structures - a research field which is central to sociological theory and cannot be dealt with by social mobility studies only (cf. Bertaux-Thompson 1993).

Finally, this work is committed to descriptive theorizing. However, the empirical conditions of political recruitment should also be of interest to those who are concerned with evaluation and prescription, as an unavoidable starting point for assessing the capacities and thrusts of ruling elites. If it is true that «nul régime n'a découvert une recette infaillible pour confier les quelques milliers de postes d'importance à quelques milliers d'hommes d'intelligence supérieure, de caractère ferme et de bonne volonté» (Aron 1965, 27), the ideal formula cannot be found unless we know the actual ingredients.

CHAPTER II

WHO ENTERS POLITICS AND WHY:

TWO PERSPECTIVES OF RESEARCH ON POLITICAL RECRUITMENT

1. The Two Faces of Political Recruitment

Matching individual ambitions with collective needs is a crucial issue for the integration of social structures¹. Historically, the various ways in which this matching takes place can be called *recruitment systems*. They consist of mechanisms by which:

- a) Individuals propose themselves to fill social roles (the *supply-side* process);
- b) Individuals are distributed among social roles (the *demand-side* process).

These two processes define the interplay of individual actors and social structures in many social settings². In politics, they outline the functioning of *political recruitment*³.

¹ This issue was first dealt with by Simmel (1968, 28-30) in his discussion of the third «a priori of society». In more recent sociological theory, it lies at the core of Bertaux's (1977) concern for the «distribution of human beings into social positions» - what this author calls «distribution anthroponomique».

² Having to account for the complementary forces of demand and supply, studies on educational and labour markets are field-specific parallels of this subject.

³ A similar framework for the study of political recruitment has been developed by Norris (1995a).

The demand side concerns the regulation of competition among political aspirants. Gate-keeping procedures have to be forged so as to reward those candidates who are most capable and willing to serve the selectors' interest. How this is achieved in reality is a paramount problem of political systems. It will be examined in the first part of this chapter (§ 2).

The supply side concerns political vocations. Only a few people make themselves available to occupy vacancies in local councils, party boards, parliaments and governments. Why them? How the impulse to enter politics comes up and persists in prospective rulers is the other fundamental question in the study of political recruitment. We will turn to its theoretical aspects later on in this chapter (§ 3).

The two perspectives on political recruitment represent different approaches for answering the key question: How are we to identify *who will take up a political career and why?* The demand-side approach sees things from the viewpoint of the selectors: the *requirements* they use in filtering out candidates define the attributes of prospective politicians. On the contrary, the supply-side approach takes the viewpoint of these politicians: the conditions under which their ambition emerges define their *incentives*.

Both of these approaches are limited when taken alone but complement each other. Both will therefore be used in this study. The demand-side perspective helps to identify the most likely potential politicians - *who may be expected to take up a political career* (chapter III). The supply-side

perspective helps to identify what induces this potential - why they take up a political career (chapters IV to VIII).

Before doing this, however, the variants of demand-side and supply-side approaches need to be reviewed. This review will help to choose the procedures and variables to be employed in the empirical part of the research.

2. Demand-side Approaches to Political Recruitment

In a demand-side perspective, «political recruitment refers to a varied set of institutional processes by which political jobs beyond the citizenship level and beyond the rank-and-file participants in campaigns and organizational life are filled» (Marvick 1976, 38; also Almond 1960, 31). Since candidates are positively screened for something they have more than the defeated in the eyes of the selectors (individuals or institutions), the approach focuses on the requirements for political selection - sometime referred to as the «opportunity structure» of recruitment (Seligman 1971). What Seligman calls a structure - perhaps inappropriately - is the set of dimensions on which the selectors evaluate aspirants to a political office⁴.

⁴ Seligman's theory of recruitment is typical of the demand-side approach, inasmuch as it is based on the functionalist reasoning implicit in it: each political system selects the most suitable politicians. This author links «opportunity structure» to the type of regime. His quite obvious concluding hypothesis is that the greater the opportunity, the more democratic the decision making. The intermediate factor explaining this relationship is «political risk» - i.e., the costs which fall on the defeated. They are «high» under authoritarian rule, and «low» under democratic rule. However the causal path connecting these three variables is not clarified.

2.1. Precursors: From Plato to Weber

The requirements for political selection have been investigated since antiquity. Given the mainly prescriptive standpoint of pre-modern accounts, however, they need only be mentioned as examples of the long-standing importance of the issue. While Plato's programme remains a major point of reference when discussing the selection of political leaders normatively (cf. Popper 1962, 120-37)⁵, Aristotle is perhaps the first thinker to face the «question of the ways of appointing the magistrates» descriptively. In the fourth book of his *Politics*, he proposes a three-dimensional classification of the recruitment systems in the Greek cities of the time: «One of those three determining points is, who are the persons who appoint the magistrates? The second is, from whom? And last, in what manner?» (1944, 361-2). A plethora of combinations of active and passive electorates and voting devices are consequently overviewed. Aristotle thus treats selection systems as the cornerstones of differing constitutional structures, yielding perhaps the most clear-cut approach to political recruitment until the

⁵ Chapter Ten of Plato's *Republic* introduces the crucial problem in terms of political philosophy - how to identify who is right to rule. Plato proposes to choose the «Rulers» from among the class of the «Guardians» in their youth. This choice has to be made through three tests, which demonstrate «who, when we look at the whole course of their lives, are found to be full of zeal to do whatever they believe is for the good of the commonwealth and never willing to act against its interest» (Plato 1945, 104). The tests consist in maintaining such a will against all odds: «thefts» (loosening of conviction caused by persuasion or by the passing of time), «violence» (infliction of «pain or suffering»), and «bewitchment» (indulgence in «the allurements of pleasure» or subjection to «the spell of panic»). The conclusion is that «all who do not reach this standard we must reject» (*ibid.*, 105).

birth of empirical political science. However, his analysis is hardly applicable to contemporary political systems.

In the Middle and Modern Ages, the theme of the «just ruler» - «legitimacy», one would say nowadays - obscured that of the functioning of recruitment. Typically, justifications or rejections of ongoing sovereigns left little or no room for description of current practices. Even in Machiavelli (1956, 39), an account of the methods for non-born princes to acquire political power is laconically reduced to two possibilities: «o con le armi d'altri o con le proprie». Equally expeditious is Marx, according to whom the problem is marginal. For governors act «on behalf» of the real power-holders (i.e., the capitalist class), political leaders' recruitment is predicated on their capacity to protect class interests (cf. Miliband 1977, 67-74).

Recruitment comes to the fore as a central theme of descriptive political theory only with the Italian elitists. In Gaetano Mosca's view, in particular, the method of selection and the degree of social differentiation of the recruits depend on the recruitment «tendency» prevailing at any given time - the demand-side and system-level independent variable⁶. According to Mosca, the ruling class by nature tends to make its privilege hereditary. In this case, he speaks of «aristocratic tendency»: the new

⁶ This idea was later imported into American political science by Lasswell and Kaplan (1950, 226), who maintained that «what is important and what varies from one body politic to another is the set of principles according to which the elite is recruited».

incumbents are most similar to their predecessors. The opposite occurs when the «democratic tendency» is at work: varying «social types» enter the ruling class in the process of political succession. Albeit loosely and sparsely, Mosca attempts to specify the conditions that facilitate a more open access to power - i.e., the shift toward the «democratic tendency» (apparently the opposite trend does not interest him). A first condition is fulfilled when «aptitudes to command and to power-wielding are no longer the monopoly of the legal rulers»; a second, when «a change takes place in the distribution of the resources on which power is based, or new resources arise»; a third, when the political class «is no longer capable of performing the social functions for which it came to power» (Sola 1982, 48-9). The democratic tendency then has the upper hand. Renewal at the top can be violent («revolution»), or take a smoother form («infiltration») consisting in the cooption of a counter-elite that usually is formed among the ruled. Mosca does not explain why one or the other form of renewal occurs. He is also rather vague about the outcomes of the different systems of recruitment, although it seems that for him the «aristocratic tendency» makes for a more disinterested but less representative political class.

Finally, it should be noted that in his review of the methods of selection - besides inheritance, cooption, and violence - Mosca leaves no place for election. Even in democracies, in his view, recruitment happens *before* elections - that is, at the moment when candidatures are put forward. At the polls, the choice is so restricted that the

voter has no real power of decision. Thus, in relation with the Italian political system of his time, in a famous passage he writes:

«If each voter gave his vote to the candidate of his heart, we may be sure that in almost all cases the only result would be a wide scattering of votes. [...] If his vote is to have any efficacy at all, therefore, each voter is forced to limit his choice to a very narrow field, in other words to a choice among the two or three persons who have some chance of succeeding; and the only ones who have any chance of succeeding are those whose candidacies are championed by groups, by committees, by organized minorities. [In sum,] the representative *has himself elected* by the voters, and, if that phrase should seem too inflexible and too harsh to fit some cases, we might qualify it by saying that *his friends have him elected*» (Mosca 1939, 154).

Extreme though it may seem, this insight suggests that systems of recruitment have to be explored prior to their final stage. It is indeed at the preceding stages that the major selection of possible rulers is likely to occur. However, the demand-side macrovariables - the «tendencies» - that Mosca proposes for determining the prospective ruling class are difficult to operationalize⁷.

⁷ Vilfredo Pareto's theory of the circulation of elites also includes some interesting remarks, albeit cryptic and of little use for our purpose, about the process of political recruitment from a demand-side perspective (cf. Parry 1969, 60-3; Bobbio 1973, 22-4; Powers 1987, 129-33). Pareto's view is that in normal times power is transmitted through (biological and cultural) inheritance. But with time the rulers unavoidably tend to lose the character that brought them to the leadership, become milder and, at the same time, greedier. A disequilibrium arises when power is not in the hands of the best endowed (Pareto 1964, 532-3, esp. § 2040; and 539-40, esp. § 2055 and 2057). As the talent and force of the governors decline, the system demands a change of elites. The doors are open to some qualified outsiders from the lower class. Unfortunately, because he is ahistorical and abstract, Pareto does not dwell on how these emerging elites can be identified empirically.

Max Weber's concern for political selection emerges after World War I, paralleling his increasing involvement in German politics⁸. He restates the problem in the most tragic, passionate, and at the same time lucid way: «What kind of a man must one be if he is to be allowed to put his hand on the wheel of history?» (Weber 1948, 115). In search of an empirically based answer, the German scholar engages himself in an unsystematic but insightful comparative study of how institutional arrangements drain the available «human material» of political leadership. He regards «the differences between political structures as differences in the types and qualities 'selected' to predominate within them» (Beetham 1985, 110; also Hennis 1988, 182-3). This leads him to sketch a demand-side model of political recruitment, in which the crucial intervening variables are the roles of parliaments, parties and electoral systems.

Parliament is in the foreground of the analysis. The concrete cases that help Weber in his modelling are Germany and Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. The German *Reichstag* was then endowed with limited powers of policy-making. It could only enforce «negative» policies, such as vetoing governmental bills or presenting popular petitions; the cabinet was not responsible to it, and bills could not be initiated by the MPs. In addition, a constitutional rule (article 9) prohibited them from becoming ministers.

⁸ This concern is primarily expressed in *Parliament und Regierung* and *Politik als Beruf*. Although both are pamphlet-like works, there is some agreement that they contain value-free analyses of reality (cf. Beetham 1985, 22-5; Cavalli 1993, 42). This interpretation is adopted here in retracing Weber's outlook on political recruitment.

Therefore, according to Weber, the German Parliament attracted ideologues without a sense of responsibility and pragmatism, devoted to demagoguery and patronage. At the same time, the monarch - who appointed the cabinet - was a «political amateur». His choices mainly relied on status and other ascriptive considerations. Thus, in no way "true" leaders, with the personal characteristics outlined in *Politik als Beruf* («passion for the cause», «farsightedness», «sense of responsibility»), were likely to rise to power. In contrast, the British Parliament had «positive» powers: law-making and, particularly in Weber's view, the control of the bureaucracy. The select committees of the House of Commons were especially appreciated by Weber, since they appeared as those «school[s] of intensive work on the reality of administration» that made British parliamentarians competent and pragmatic. Excellence among them emerged out of the concrete capacity to make the administration more effective, not out of demagoguery. In turn, the chance to make one's name in parliament, and through this to reach the cabinet, attracted the best minds of the country to the legislature. In Britain, due to the role of parliament, argued Weber, MPs constantly formed a reservoir of realistic leaders capable of subjecting one quarter of the human race to their will.

After the First World War, Weber reconsidered to some extent his previous hypothesis about the importance of parliamentary selection. His focus shifted to an earlier stage of political recruitment - the selection of candidates. In *Politik als Beruf*, the interaction of party

structures and electoral systems is described as affecting different types of political recruitment. With the extension of the suffrage, a tendency towards the personalization of politics was held to be highly probable. Party officials and local notables would have resisted this development. In the tension between the emergence of personal leadership and the persistence of mass organization, a decisive role was to be played by the electoral system. According to Weber, proportional voting tends to lead to an alliance between party apparatuses and interest groups. This would bring to parliament a bunch of particularist representatives and lobbyists. Majority voting, on the contrary, tends to force party machines to choose prestigious outsiders - the only ones capable of conquering a mass electorate - as their candidates. Paradoxically, if the patronage-oriented party machine is to survive, a "clean" leader is needed⁹.

2.2. *Excursus: Political Recruitment and Democratic Theory*

Latent in Weber's reasoning is the issue of the relationship between political recruitment and democracy. Schumpeter's (1950) well-known theory that democracy is a procedure for generating political leaders clearly originates from Weber's perspective¹⁰. Both thinkers,

⁹ A first example of this process according to Weber was the sudden rise and success of a respectable figure such as Woodrow Wilson within the boss-dominated Democratic Party in the United States.

¹⁰ More precisely, the Weberian element in the 'realistic' conception of democracy which Schumpeter inaugurates is that «the central feature of modern society» is not its democratic character but «its need for leadership» (Parry-Moran 1994, 5).

however, seem to be too acritical about the virtues of universal suffrage. In particular, their viewpoints are predicated on the implicit assumption that the majority principle brings about the emergence of the most talented leaders. But why should more popular men be better statesmen? Not necessarily a good general on the «electoral battle-field», to take Weber's image, is a good policy-maker¹¹. Implicitly, faith in plebiscitary democracy means faith in the majority's capacity of choice.

To this objection, Weber would probably reply that elections do not mean that the best leader is chosen, but only that there is the widest *recognition* of who is such a leader. If nobody can claim to hold indisputable criteria of judgment about who would be the most valid ruler in absolute terms, at least the democratic procedure is most valid in maximizing consensus around this judgment.

Unfortunately, this argument expresses nothing more than a form of absolute relativism - a position that Weber was not allegedly prone to sustain. Yet, this must be accepted if it is claimed that democracy is the best method of political selection. In fact, no concession to relativism is made by the alternative view of democracy that sees it as the best method for communicating to the defeated minority that it is a minority - i.e., that it cannot depend on the largest following should it seek to seize power with force.

¹¹ The argument is not new. It dates back at least to Bryce's (1888, 100-10) remarks about «why great men are not chosen Presidents» in the U.S. More recently it has been used again, among others, by Sartori (1987, 140-1; 1993, 96-100) and Baechler (1985, 84).

The democratic procedure of political recruitment, then, can be defended less for its selection capacity than for its peace-keeping virtue, since it discourages those leaders who have a smaller number of supporters from resorting to violence. From a recruitment perspective also, the strongest argument for democracy is that it secures peace rather than better rulers (cf. Popper 1962, 124).

2.3. Stages of Political Selection

Let us turn back to the main problem to be settled in this first part of the chapter: How can prospective politicians be identified? From Mosca we can retain the suggestion that even in democracy a great deal of political selection takes place before election. From Weber, we borrow the idea that a causal path links electoral systems, party models, and type of political personnel. More recently, a number of demand-side schemes of recruitment have been proposed to incorporate these preliminary intuitions.

In contemporary democratic systems, the recruitment process is a combination of different mechanisms of selection operating at successive stages. Prewitt (1970, 8) draws a «chinese box puzzle» framework, in which the population is sorted according to its degree of political involvement. Thus, from the widest number of ordinary citizens is drawn the (1) «Dominant Social Stratum»; this expresses the (2) «Politically Active Stratum», within which one finds the smaller circle of the (3) «Recruits and Apprentices»; some of these then become the (4) «Candidates», among whom the (5) «Governors» are chosen.

Recruitment stages can be seen as the "leaps" from one status to the next - the whole process consisting, as Prewitt says, in how «from the many are chosen the few». Yet, although it is most often empirically true that «socioeconomic characteristics partly determine the reservoir from which officeholders are selected» (*ibid.*, 26), entering the «Dominant Social Stratum» is a process of social mobility (or immobility), not of political recruitment. The socially privileged are not necessarily driven by political ambition, nor promoted up the social ladder by the selection of political personnel.

Seligman (1971, 3) sets forth a different classification, stressing stages rather than statuses. He distinguishes a «general model of the political recruitment process» comprising four phases, each of which «modifies the roles of those who pass through it»: «eligibility», «selection», «role assignment», and «role behavior». Seligman's terminology, however, is unfortunate: it is quite generic and it refers more to the outcomes of each step of the recruitment process (e.g., «role behavior») than to its dynamics.

Herzog's (1971, 519; 1975, 46-52) sequence is more precise. It considers the following stages: «political socialization», «activation», «selection», «appointment», and «entry into the elite». Explicitly, the first two stages are not part of the screening system. They represent moments in the formation of the supply in the market of political personnel: following their «political socialization» and

«activation» aspirants come to the fore¹². The subsequent three stages, instead, are on the *demand* side of the model. They correspond to the barriers to be overcome in the route to the top of political hierarchies in democratic systems: being selected as a candidate, being elected, taking a leading role among the elected.

The number and nature of these stages, however, is unavoidably contingent on the legal framework of reference. The variety of constitutional devices limits the scope of any workable scheme of the political recruitment process. Herzog's model seems to be applicable to parliamentary systems other than West Germany, but not without exceptions. For instance, when France was a parliamentary democracy, General De Gaulle was appointed prime minister (in 1958) without having to pass any electoral test - i.e., the normal «selection» stage. Yet the procedure was formally correct. Political actors who have skipped one or more steps of the process can always be found. All the available schemes, in sum, are designed inductively and can only claim a probabilistic validity.

Given our aim of identifying potential politicians, the schemes just reviewed seem too wide and encompassing. In a very general way, they suggest treating recruitment systems as being composed of progressive and crucial thresholds. From an operational point of view, these thresholds consist

¹² The term 'activation' is a literal translation from the German *Aktivierung*. Although it does not correspond to the normal English usage of the word, it will be used hereafter given the lack of any viable alternative.

of rules that vary across political systems. As will be seen in the next sections, these rules can be manifest (§ 2.4) or latent (§ 2.5)¹³. They are the best available indicators for identifying the social actors that are most likely to enter politics from a demand-side perspective.

2.4. Manifest Rules of Political Selection

There is a large number of manifest rules for leadership selection: inheritance, rotation, lot, purchase of office, forcible appropriation, examination, cooption, and election (Keller 1963, 179; Marvick 1968, 277-8; differing classes in Loewenstein 1990, 27-9). In modern democracies, only one of these has been definitely excluded: *force*¹⁴. Meanwhile, only one is regarded as completely legitimate: election. But, although this principle is necessary in all democratic systems, it is sufficient in none. Even in the United States, where it is most extensively applied, there are non-elective political offices. Comparative evidence indicates the persisting recourse to all the other criteria of political selection in the contemporary world.

Transmission of political power by *inheritance*, for instance, is effectively at work in Japan, where in 1990 a

¹³ 'Rule' has two meanings in the social sciences. On the one hand, it refers to criteria that guide individuals' action; in this case, we speak of *manifest* rules. On the other hand, the term refers to a regularity that emerges unintentionally in social life; in this case, we speak of *latent* rules.

¹⁴ A previous section (§ 2.2) has shown that democracy is, indeed, best characterized as a recruitment system that discourages the use of violence among competing actors.

quarter of the Diet members (more than 40% in the LDP) were second generation deputies (Fukai-Fukui 1992, 30; also Rothacher 1993, 49-52). Another outstanding example is China: «The relatives of China's senior leadership have become one of the most significant recruitment pools for China's 'second' and 'third' generation of leaders» (Scot Tanner-Feder 1993, 90; for other cases, Putnam 1976, 61; Czudnowski 1975, 188-90). In the U.S., too, «prior to World War II, [...] heredity was a crucial path to the Congress for women. During those early years, a majority of congresswomen were widows of former legislators [...]. Even in the period 1968 to 1975, approximately one of every four new women in the House was the widow of a congressman or congressional candidate» (Hulse Thompson 1985, 72-3). Furthermore, inheritance is still the principle for the succession of the Heads of State in constitutional monarchies.

Rotation is an established rule for bestowing the Presidency of the Council in the European Union; at the national level, albeit in informal terms, it is a quite frequent outcome of elite pacts. *Lot* has come to be used rarely, except for the selection of juries in criminal courts, and as the mechanism for choosing who is elected in the case of a draw in many political systems. However, it is achieving wider currency. Proposals for forming «assemblies of randomly selected citizens», at least as «advisory councils to every elected official», have found outstanding advocates in recent times (Dahl 1991, 12 and 16). *Purchase of office* is illegal everywhere, although votes are regularly bought and sold in many regions of the world.

Moreover, even in richer countries electoral success is often correlated to campaign investments - and this may well appear an indirect form of venality of office. *Examination* is the typical device for screening candidates for the civil service; it is also the customary way to choose party candidates in British constituencies and for the approval of presidential appointees to the Supreme Court in the U.S. Senate.

Finally, there is *cooption* - namely, designation to elite membership made by the existing elite members¹⁵. No rule in the stages of «selection» and «entry into the elite» appears as common as this one. Cooption is also the most common procedure for appointing incumbents to offices in corporations, associations, and other non-political groups. Compared to other rules, it is less structured and leaves a wider autonomy of judgment for the selector. Usually, this encourages the selector to choose on the basis of the primary criterion for human association: homophily (i.e., the similarity appeal). As a consequence, cooption tends to promote continuity in succession. Better than other methods, cooption maintains group identity in spite of individuals' replacement (Loewenstein 1990, 253-4).

In the process of political recruitment, the paramount role of cooption at the «selection» stage is linked to that

¹⁵ Since Mosca's and Pareto's times, a more specific use of this term is sometimes referred to in political science and sociology, meaning «the process of disarming competitive elements by appointing them to offices» (Calvert 1987, 7). As can be seen, this alternative definition mixes up the method of selection and one of its possible purposes. Incidentally, in his further treatment of political succession, Calvert resorts to the more general definition of the concept.

of parties as selectors - a quasi-monopolistic role in comparative perspective (Bartolini 1986, 263-5; Blondel 1990, 198-9; Lagroye 1991, 230). Almost everywhere candidates in elections run under party flags; the choice of candidates is normally attributed to party committees (the selection of which is in turn problematic). From Michels onwards, an extensive empirical literature has been gathered to show that cooption is typically adopted by such committees (e.g., Duverger 1969, 167). Loewenstein (1990, 270-1) observes that a special form of cooption is at work here. He calls it «representative cooption». In contrast to its purest form, in this case the coopted individual is not bound to become part of the coopting group, but rather to represent it elsewhere¹⁶.

In any case, cooption results in selection being guided by the criteria of social and cultural affinity. It is highly improbable that "strangers" - however brilliant their curricula - will be proposed. Why is this so? A point which is usually neglected is that cooption allows for some personal guarantee to be placed on the chosen individual by a part or all of the choosing group. This is what "sponsors" are for. They are held responsible for their protégés' failure. The tacit legitimacy of the method mainly relies on

¹⁶ Loewenstein analyzes a wide array of variants of cooption. His work probably contains probably an exhaustive historical review of the cases in which this method has obtained legal recognition (Roman magistratures, committees in British local government, Belgian Senate, American Vice-Presidency, et alia). Loewenstein also turns to the two contemporary institutions where one can find informal but routine recourse to cooption: parties and corporations. Yet, this part of the book is less documented. Pathbreaking though it is, Loewenstein's study fails to explore the dynamics of cooption processes.

this insurance being associated with it. The alternative method - election - does not give such a insurance. Bad choices made via an election cannot be indemnified, only repaired - but not before the next term. Because of this functional advantage, representative cooption may be compatible with a democratic context¹⁷. Provided the sponsors are known, the represented can make good of their losses at the sponsors' expenses¹⁸.

To recapitulate: the rules which govern selection are fundamental in separating potential politicians from other citizens. Each rule implies some key requirement for selection: kinship for «inheritance», timing for «rotation», chance for «lot», wealth for «purchase of office», force for «appropriation», specific competence for «examination», and similarity for «cooption»¹⁹. Particular attention has been paid to the latter rule, given its empirical importance within parties. However, little is known about how sponsorship relations are formed in politics. Why does the sponsor X prefer Y to Z? And why does Y aim at X's rather than W's sponsorship? To know that similarity guides such

¹⁷ On this crucial point, Loewenstein is rather vague, even though he does not adopt the radical stance according to which the use of cooption in political recruitment makes of democracy a myth, as Michels and the early Mosca do (Cotta 1990, 10-1).

¹⁸ Empirically, cooption is also a common selection device in the last stage of the political recruitment process - the «entry into the elite» - at the top of contemporary democratic regimes. «Only in two pluralist democracies, Australia and New Zealand, are ministers elected by Parliament; in the other thirty or so democracies they are appointed or co-opted by peers» (Dogan 1989, 1). Even though the institutions and characters are different, the process is the same as in the «selection» stage.

¹⁹ In contrast, «election» poses less restrictive requirements to potential political aspirants.

mutual choices gives only a limited help: similarity of what? Class, status, value orientations? Therefore, even if we happen to know what is the manifest rule for political selection in a given system, this would not help much in identifying the lot of the prospective politicians. Latent rules, to which we now turn, appear more useful when seeking to predict who is more likely to enter politics.

2.5. Latent Rules of Political Selection

Even in regimes based on the equality of political rights and opportunities, political elites tend to have specific attributes which may be regarded as those requirements for being recruited that are fixed by latent rules of selection. However, such attributes tend to be context-sensitive: what is prized in one system at a given time is not appreciated in another at another time.

A more comprehensive approach focuses on the «opportunity structure» that is held to characterize selection in every political system (Schlesinger 1966). In Schlesinger's usage, «opportunity structure» defines the probabilities that a category of individuals has to reach another office²⁰. The basic idea is that in every political system there is a tendency to value the previous experiences of candidates for political posts. Latent rules define the suitability of individuals with given curricula and career timetables for filling political vacancies. One or more past

²⁰ Despite the homology, Schlesinger's «opportunity structure» differs from Seligman's concept reviewed before.

incumbencies are the "appropriate" passages for making a would-be politician a serious aspirant to higher positions.

In Schlesinger's work (as in this one), political ambition is regarded as an attribute of positions in a given opportunity structure rather than a subjectively expressed motivation (the validity of which is always dubious). In other words, subjective ambition is predicated on the objective odds of promotion²¹. These have to be assessed by empirical research.

As an application of the theory, Schlesinger's study proves that there are orderly paths to higher political offices in the United States (*ibid.*, 89 ff.). For instance, thirteen paths account for more than 70% of the variance in the careers of U.S. Senators in the period 1914-1958. Although Schlesinger is able to chart three-stage career sequences in the form of «frequency trees», his approach is best illustrated by focusing on the opportunities for successive advancement associated with a single stage - e.g., the first office ever held by incumbent Senators (table 1). Historical precedents show that positions in the law enforcement, administrative, or state legislative systems are the most typical "launching-pads". By contrast,

²¹ In the late 1960s, the link between subjective wishes and objective chances established by Schlesinger was underscored also in Bourdieu's and Passeron's studies of educational careers. They pointed out that each social category in the structure of educational opportunities monitors «conditional probabilities» of social mobility (that the researcher validates statistically) through a «process of internalization of the category's objective destiny» (Bourdieu-Passeron 1977, 226). In spite of criticisms (Boudon 1973, 55), this assumption has become widespread in research on status attainment and mobility processes (e.g., Erikson-Goldthorpe 1992, 304).

in order to reach the Senate, a too "far-removed" or too "close" start (such as, respectively, a local council or the Congress) are, for opposite reasons, less successful career plans.

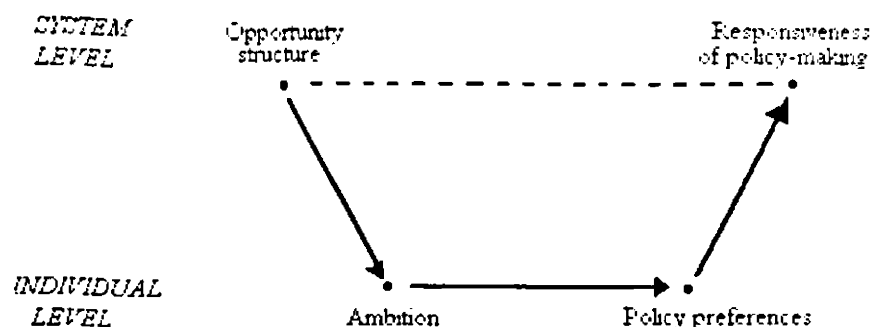
Table 1: Entry points of the political careers of U.S. Senators (1914-58)

	N	%
Law Enforcement	117	26.0
Administration	102	22.7
State Legislature	97	21.6
Local Council	37	8.2
No Prior Office	37	8.2
Congress	26	5.8
Statewide Office	14	3.1
Unknown	20	4.4
Total	450	100.0

Source: Elaborated from Schlesinger (1966, 92)

Schlesinger's rationale for studying opportunity structures is their expected ultimate influence on politicians' behaviour. Career opportunities prompt ambition, and ambition ties office-holders to their constituents, making them fear the loss of office. Consequently, they are stimulated to support policies suited to the voters' interests. Much in a functionalist vein, the theory states that opportunity structures are devices through which political systems regulate political outcomes so as to make these correspond to public demands.

Figure 1: The causal connections of Schlesinger's ambition theory



Although nowhere is it stated explicitly, Schlesinger's ambition theory can be summarized in a causal chain (figure 1)²². Most of the subsequent empirical works on political ambition have concentrated on some part of this model (cf. Prewitt-Nowlin 1969; Black 1972; Bullock 1972; Hain 1974; Rohde 1979; Brace 1984; Carroll 1985; Hibbing 1986; Squire 1988; Hibbing 1991; Burt Way-Mae Kelly 1992; Kiewiet-Zeng 1993; Herrick-Moore 1993). In the next chapter, the influence of the opportunity structure on the targets of individual ambition - the first macro-micro link in the model - will constitute a starting point for the empirical analysis. In particular, we will rely on Schlesinger's basic «idea that a political structure acts on the choices of

²² The first and the last elements of the causal chain are at the system level and the two intermediate ones at the individual level, as in the general model of sociological explanation proposed by Coleman (1990, 6 ff.).

individuals so as to systematically affect all political office-seekers» (Black 1972, 145; cf. also Prinz 1993, 28). Since historical patterns show the statistically more successful pathways to the top, the politicians-to-be are likely to design their careers accordingly, setting their sights on some rather than other offices.

Schlesinger's approach is not without problems, however. First, its validity is contingent on the «stability of the system». When a political system changes abruptly, the rules of political selection change. But even when the system remains stable, some deviation from the rules may occur over time. This undermines the value of the opportunity structures at time X as indicators of the requirements for political recruitment at time X+1.

A related problem is the definition of the time scale in which opportunity structures are to be calculated. What are the criteria for fixing it? Schlesinger fails to account for this issue²³. Yet, a solution is quite important for the replication of the approach. Plausibly the time scale has to be accorded with the research perspective. If one attempts to find systemic regularities like Schlesinger does, the period considered must be as long as the system duration. This is not the case when the research focus is on the strategy for promotion of politically ambitious actors. Office-seekers set their goals on the basis of their own

²³ For instance, while Schlesinger's reconstruction covers a 44 years span (1914-1958) for U.S. Senators and a 58 years span (1900-1958) for U.S. Governors, there seems to be no theoretical reason for this 14 year difference.

perception of the opportunity structure. They ground it on the direct experiences of their political life: if they have been in politics thirty years, they take as a reference point the career paths of the politicians on the scene in the last thirty years or so. In our case, analyzing the youngest political generation, we will need to draw a rather short-run opportunity structure, corresponding to the short career experience of the actors studied (i.e., young political activists).

This leads to the last weakness of Schlesinger's work: «While Schlesinger can chart recruitment patterns, his data do not permit an examination of ambition directly» (Black 1972, 144). In other words, Schlesinger does not examine the supply-side conditions for the emergence of ambition. The empirical investigation of the next chapters will attempt to fill this gap, using the opportunity structure as a means to single out young ambitious politicians and, then, study them directly. Schlesinger's approach helps to understand through which institutional filters and channels the lot of the available politicians is screened. The *subjective* conditions that make people enter this lot constitute a different theoretical question, to which the chapter now turns.

3. Supply-Side Approaches to Political Recruitment

Political recruitment was not approached from a supply-side standpoint until relatively recently. In the pre-democratic age, only usurpers proposed themselves for political office. The rise of political ambition as a more

mundane and widespread phenomenon coincides with the emergence of universal franchise. This brought about what has been called a «democratization of expectations» (Keller 1963, 182) about the distribution of political power.

Theoretically, thus, in liberal democracies the gates of political recruitment are open. Yet, those who are available for political office are still relatively few. Empirical tests show that self-exclusion is more important than selectors' bias in shaping the social composition of political elites²⁴. Whatever the cause for this may be, political ambition affects only a tiny minority of the population. It must even be stimulated and cherished, since «a political system unable to kindle ambitions for office is as much in danger of breaking down as one unable to restrain ambitions. [...] Government, above all, depends on a supply of men so driven» (Schlesinger 1966, 2). Such a «drive» to «self-selection» of potential politicians constitutes that «one thing in common which distinguishes them greatly from their fellow citizens» (Bealey 1988, 230). Its origin is the key question of political recruitment theory in a supply-side perspective.

Seeking to explain political recruitment by identifying politicians' «anomaly», existing supply-side models have

²⁴ Supply-side factors proved to play a stronger role than demand-side factors in the process of recruitment of MPs in Britain, given that applicants who failed to become candidates did not differ from both actual candidates and MPs. Yet they differed much from the population (Norris-Lovenduski 1993).

assigned causal priority to various aspects of personality, social origins, and social networks²⁵.

²⁵ Historically, the first fragmentary accounts of the "anomaly" of the political man can be found in Ostrogorski, Weber, and Pareto. Moisei Ostrogorski's analysis anticipates and, probably, inspires Weber's ideas to a great extent. The Russian scholar depicts two types of politicians, the «Professional» and the «Gentleman». Professional politicians - a novelty in nineteenth century British politics - are «personnes qui vivent exclusivement de la politique» (Ostrogorski 1903, I, 556); the gentleman politician is a more traditional figure, «censé avoir des ressources indépendantes provenant de ses terres et non de spéculations ou d'appointments» (*ibid.*, I, 5). A similar classification emerges from the American political world. Ostrogorski points out that the critical dimension of «census» (wealth) is linked to «temperament» (motivation). Focusing on the political personnel of American party conventions, he draws three ideal-types of politicians: a) «politiciens mercenaires», who take part in politics «on business»; b) an intermediate stratum of non-professional politicians motivated by a mix of vanity and interest for spoils to dispense to friends; this stratum is made of «petites gens remplis de petite vanité» and also «personnages d'un rang plus élevé» who, «sans être des professionnels, trouvent, dans cette situation éphémère, des satisfactions d'amour-propre, ne serait-ce que la satisfaction très modeste de voir leur nom imprimé dans le journal local, ou, s'ils sont d'un tempérament nerveux, des occasions à émotions plus ou moins fortes», and, lastly, «places et d'autres "bonnes choses" [à] procurer à des amis»; c) «enfin il y a une catégorie de délégués obscurs, humbles, libres du cant de ces respectables personnages et qui ont le désir sincère de s'acquitter de leur tâche pour le bien public» (*ibid.*, II, 214).

The blueprint of this typology was revived and emulated by many scholars - among whom Max Weber (1948). In Weber's more famous distinction, those who «live off politics» and those who «live for politics» correspond respectively to Ostrogorski's professional and gentleman politicians.

A different supply-side theory of political recruitment is presented by Vilfredo Pareto. Pareto holds a vision of men as psychologically marked by some basic and universal traits (*residui*). The six basic classes of *residui* are unequally distributed among the population. Political elites have a prominent share of «*residui di classe I*» or «*residui di classe II*». The first kind of *residui* is called «*istinto delle combinazioni*», the second «*persistenza degli aggregati*». Those politicians who have more of the *istinto delle combinazioni* are «*materialisti*»; if they are part of the governmental elite, Pareto calls them «*volpi*». Those in whom «*persistenza degli aggregati*» prevails, Pareto calls «*idealisti*»; if they are members of the governmental elite, they are named «*leoni*». Concerning goals, «*foxes*» are interested in material rewards and pleasures. Their political performances, therefore, are aimed at maintaining order and social peace. As leaders, they rule by «*concessions*». Their tendency to compromise is a by-product of their fundamental ability to combine things, people, and ideals. They are masters of consociational practices *ante litteram*. The goal of «*lions*», on the other hand, is the fulfillment of their principles. Sometimes Pareto seems to say that they like superiority as such, but, in any case, they neglect material rewards. They invest all their energy in exalting their own principles - whatever they may be - and inflexibly

3.1. The Importance of Personality

Freud's emphasis on childhood as the seedbed of adult actions was imported into political research primarily by Harold Dwight Lasswell in the 1920s. Political recruitment was perhaps the first field of application of the then revolutionary conjunction of psychoanalysis and political science. The idea that politicians are guided by some "peculiar" and "pathological" force at the psychic level had been expressed before - even though in an impressionistic form. Michels (1962, 205), for instance, had written that political men are moved by a «natural greed for power»²⁶. Lasswell found this image of the *homo politicus* also in the works of two of his scholarly mentors - Charles Merriam and Alfred Adler - and in Eduard Spranger's *Lebensformen*, which influenced him greatly (Greenstein 1977). However, he elaborated on it in the light of Freud's conceptions. The result was the first supply-side theory of political recruitment.

In *Psychopathology and Politics* (1977), Lasswell adds to the basic idea that political personalities are «power-oriented» an account of the crucial «developmental sequence» of such an orientation and the corresponding behaviour - i.e., self-selection for political roles²⁷. This sequence

promoting them. In doing this, they do not hesitate to use violence. If they happen to come to power, they rule by «coercion».

²⁶ Weber (1948, 116) shares Michels' judgment in *Politik als Beruf*: «The politician [...] works with the striving for power as an unavoidable means. Therefore, 'power instinct', as is usually said, belongs indeed to his moral qualities». As an assumption in their theories, the point is taken again by Schumpeter (1950, 282) and Downs (1957, 27 ff.).

²⁷ Lasswell (1977, 273) drew on clinical records of mentally disturbed American former-politicians and «life-history interviews with

comprises three stages: the first during childhood, the second during puberty, the third at maturity. Initially, there is «a repressed and powerful hatred of authority, a hatred which has come to partial expression and repression in relation to the father, at least in patrilineal society» (*ibid.*, 75). For the sake of psychic balance, the subject needs to overcome the sense of inferiority deriving from paternal domination. This happens in the second phase of the process, through a «compensation» consisting in the «displacement of private motives from family objects to public objects». Finally, there is a «rationalization of the displacement in terms of public interest»²⁸. Lasswell sums it all up in a «general formula which expresses the developmental facts about the fully developed political man [that] reads thus:

$$p \} d \} r = P$$

where *p* equals private motives; *d* equals displacement onto a public object; *r* equals rationalization in terms of public interest; *P* equals the political man; and *}* equals transformed into» (*ibid.*, 75-6).

The initial situation, Lasswell writes, «is shared by the political man with every human being» (*ibid.*, 76). But

politically active persons. The interviews elicited free associations from the subjects, thus obtaining a body of material more amenable to «depth» interpretation than was obtained by traditional methods of interviewing and participant observation». No full transcription of these interviews is provided (it seems that they were burnt accidentally); the number of them is not even reported. Needless to say, by current standards the empirical support Lasswell gives to his theory is weak.

²⁸ For example, «the merciless exploitation of the toolless proletariat by the capitalists may be the rational justification of the attitude taken up by the individual toward capitalism» (Lasswell 1977, 75).

almost everybody displaces his own hatred on private objects (such as bosses at work). Only a minority turns to public objects. Finally, only a few within this minority find a rationale for their aggressive outlook in the public sphere. The occurrence of both the second and third psychological processes is what makes a political man²⁹.

Lasswell is aware that his is not as yet a model that explains fully the causes that lead some people to move into politics. So, he asks himself, «upon what does the displacement and the rationalization depend?» (*ibid.*, 76). No answer can be found in *Psychopathology and Politics*³⁰. In a later writing, *Power and Personality* (1948), Lasswell comes back to the point with a more worked-out hypothesis which is accurately summarized by Greenstein (1977, xvii-xviii):

«Political men are typically individuals seeking to compensate for an unconscious sense of damaged self-esteem resulting from earlier experiences in which rewards and sanctions were intermixed in such a way

²⁹ No sexist connotation must be attributed to the use of the concept of «political man» or male pronouns for referring to the general category of political activists in the whole of this study.

³⁰ Lasswell (1977, 77) seems to believe that the starting mechanisms are different in different types of politicians. Hence, he moves on to interview-based portraits of «Agitators», «Administrators» and «Theorists» (a classification he borrows from Spranger). Apart from the psychoanalytical details, Lasswell's «Agitator» is, in the final analysis, not very dissimilar from Pareto's «Lion», for he «easily infers that he who disagrees with him is in communion with the devil, and that opponents show bad faith or timidity [...] The agitator trusts in mass appeals and general principles» (*ibid.*, 78-9). «Administrators», on the other hand, displace their feelings of low self-esteem, developed in early life, on the «well-worked-out ordering of parts», «the imposition of uniformity», «the desubjectification of the situation» (Lasswell 1948, 62). Their ultimate goal is just the compulsive accomplishment of duties. «Theorists» are named but not dealt with. However, there is no theoretical account of the crucial process differentiating politicians from non-political men.

that, though the individual did not become emotionally incapacitated as the result of the sanctions, he was left with an insecurity that was vented in a compulsion to exercise power».

Political man, thus, is the product of "some but not too much" repression in childhood. His self-esteem was lowered by the Oedipus complex, but not to the point of abandoning the quest of redress (Bryder 1994, 404).

However, some problems are left unsolved. Firstly, Lasswell does not help to determine the boundary between low and too low self-esteem. Secondly, the reasons for which «rationalization» takes place at a later stage are not clarified. Thirdly, and consequently, his hypothesis is difficult to operationalize. Attempts to do so have focused on either the last or the intermediate term of the psychological process depicted by Lasswell: respectively, a *high power drive* and a *low self-esteem*³¹.

In Lasswell's writings, the idea that political men feel a stronger need for domination than ordinary people «has been continuously modified, but the core notion remains» (Stone 1981, 11)³². Applying content analysis or projective techniques (in particular, the Thematic Apperception Test [TAT]), a series of studies conducted in

³¹ Other attempts to test Lasswell's theory were carried out with more generic psychopathology scales (Rutherford 1966; Marcus 1969; Carlson-Hyde 1980). However, they were not able to demonstrate a firm relationship between psychic symptoms and political activity or to link their evidence to the guiding theory.

³² Lasswell (1954, 223) had some afterthoughts with respect to the pathological nature of this need; he thus wrote that «it is probable that a basically healthy personality is essential to survive the perpetual uncertainties of political life».

the 1950s and 1960s addressed the «politicians as power-mad» hypothesis (as Putnam [1976, 73] called it). Comparing student candidates to academic governmental bodies and «ordinary» students, Veroff's (1957) findings confirmed it. Winter's (1973) replications and extensions of this research corroborated previous results. By contrast, when focusing on party activists or members of State legislatures, McConaughy (1950), Hennessy (1959), and Harned (1961) found no significant support for the hypothesis. Above all, drawing on McClelland's (1961) scheme of basic personality needs, and with a wider and more internally diversified sample of political actors than their predecessors, Browning and Jacob (1964, 89) reached the conclusion that «simply being a politician does not entail a distinctive concern for power»³³. Yet all these studies have serious sample limits and conceptual inaccuracies. The power motive is operationalized in different and not entirely consistent ways. Moreover, since they were influenced by the then ongoing debate about authoritarian personality, some scholars tended to intertwine «power-seeking drive» and «authoritarianism» (or related concepts) in empirical research. In particular, discovering a high level of «dogmatism» among Italian parliamentarians, DiRenzo (1967a; 1967b) presented this result as consistent with Lasswell's

³³ Browning (1968) obtained more qualified results in a later study, in which motivations and situations of political involvement were related. He found that individuals high only on the Affiliation Need scale entered the political arena only when strongly requested by others, whilst self-selected candidates scored lower on the Affiliation Need scale and higher on both the Power and the Achievement Need scales.

theory³⁴. However, «dogmatism» is a pathology of the cognitive level of personality, while the «power-seeking drive» operates at the motivational level. A link between the two is neither empirically proved by DiRenzo nor theoretically implied by Lasswell's model³⁵.

In principle, authoritarianism would even seem to be a trait more germane to Lasswell's idealtype of the political personality. As in Lasswell's picture, repression during childhood also figures as the triggering factor in the Frankfurt School's account of the authoritarian personality³⁶. Hence, although no empirical research has made it explicit, a linkage between the political and the authoritarian personality may be considered as one of the possible hypotheses about the roots of political ambition.

In general, the existing tests of the «politician as power-mad» hypothesis are inconclusive. Some commentators have even objected that a wrong focus had been chosen, namely politicians in an «institutional» rather than «functional» sense: «The population to which Lasswell refers when he speaks of "political man" is not comparable, say, to

³⁴ A similar conclusion was reached by a psychological comparison of political activists and nonactivists among American college students that found the first group to «value leadership more» and to be «definitely more ascendant and assertive» (Kerpelman 1972, 113).

³⁵ DiRenzo's research has been the target of some well-argued methodological criticisms (Tullio Altan-Marradi 1976, 309-10). After a replication with a sample of American State legislators, DiRenzo (1977) himself revised his controversial thesis, introducing the variable 'political culture' as the catch-all intervening explanation.

³⁶ Levinson (1968, 24-7) and Scheepers et al. (1990, 15-8) give short but precise accounts of the nature and origins of the authoritarianism complex according to the Frankfurt School, whilst Gabennesch (1972) reviews alternative frameworks and developments exhaustively.

the population of delegates to an American presidential nominating convention» (Greenstein 1977, xiv-xv).

Closer to Lasswell's original theory are the studies focusing on the self-esteem of activists prior to their involvement in politics³⁷. This is the second form of research aimed - more or less directly - at testing the theory. The argument that individuals deprived of self-esteem in their infancy are overrepresented among political leaders is put forward in the large majority, if not all, of the psychobiographies of presidents, dictators, ministers, and mayors written in the 1950s and 1960s (cf. Knutson 1973, 50)³⁸.

Unfortunately, this hypothesis is seldom reckoned with in non-idiographic research. A study of British prime ministers from 1809 to 1940 seems to be the only exception (Iremonger 1970). In a nutshell, this study claimed that the development of abnormal ambition among British premiers was a consequence of their lack of affection and loneliness at an early age (61% of them were orphan children). For these political leaders, Iremonger argued, the satisfaction of a mass scale consent functioned as a substitute for the love they could not receive in face to face relationships.

³⁷ Self-esteem is usually defined as «the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself» (Coopersmith 1967, 4-5).

³⁸ More recent authors using this argument are Kearney (1983), Rintala (1984), Kets De Vries (1993).

However, «her statistics are marred by error and, like most commentators in this field, she exploits every ambiguous report or equivocal event in a way favourable to her hypothesis» (Berrington 1974, 369). Firstly, orphans in the British elite groups were more numerous than Iremonger assumes (Berrington estimates 36% of peers in 1841); the percentage of the bereaved among prime ministers remains very high, but not exceptional. Secondly, according to biographical accounts, some prime ministers did not display «personal unhappiness» in their private life (for instance, in their marriage); in contrast with Iremonger's thesis, political power was not the unique psychic gratification they could afford.

An important revision of the «deprived self-esteem» argument was advanced by Barber (1965). His analysis of the personality structure of Connecticut State legislators led him to underline both very low and very high self-esteem as subjective preconditions for entering politics. As he observed, the choice of a political career «is likely to be taken by two kinds of people: those who have such high self-esteem that they can manage relatively easily the threats and strains and anxieties involved in this change [of life habits]; and those who have such low self-esteem that they are ready to do this extraordinary thing to raise it» (*ibid.*, 223-4). However, Barber's assessment of self-esteem is largely impressionistic and is not methodologically structured. Perhaps for this reason, his argument has not been taken up by successive research (for an exception, cf. Clarke-Donovan 1980).

Ziller's (1969; Ziller et al. 1977) projective technique, requiring self-ranking in relation to a variety of social roles in interviews, appears more reliable. Ziller proved that candidates to U.S. State legislatures with low self-esteem had greater chances of being elected. But these chances peaked when a second personality trait was present: complexity of the belief structure (88% of the candidates scoring low on self-esteem and high on complexity won the race)³⁹. Elaborating on this finding,

«Ziller suggested that the "political" person is more responsive than his apolitical counterpart. Responsivity is a joint function of the desire to relate to other people and the ability to relate to others. These two characteristics stem from low self-esteem and high complexity. A person with low self-esteem is thought to have a less stable basis for self-evaluation. Thus, he is more likely to try to adapt to other people [...]. The more complex person [...] is more able to find points of similarity with other people» (Stone 1974, 102-3).

³⁹ After Ziller, «complexity» has been extensively researched by Tetlock and his associates. In assessing the concept, Tetlock takes into account the following issues: «Do [the subjects] see only good consequences flowing from options they reject? Do they divide the world into polarized "us" against them camps? Do they acknowledge uncertainty and the need for additional information in making policy decisions? Do they see causation as a fundamentally simple or complex process (univariate or multivariate, unidirectional or bidirectional, additive or interactive)? Do they acknowledge that reasonable people might view the same event in different ways?» (Tetlock-Boettger 1989, 210). Operationally Tetlock (1985, 268-9) defines the complexity of belief structures as being composed of «two cognitive stylistic variables, differentiation and integration. Differentiation refers to the number of dimensions of a problem that are taken into account in evaluating or interpreting events. [...] Integration depends on whether [one] perceives the differentiated characteristics as operating in isolation (low integration), in first-order or simple interactions (the effects of A on B depend on levels of C, moderate integration), or in multiple, contingent patterns (high integration)». It must be noted that this definition of complexity does not fit perfectly the definition of the concept in "traditional" psychology (Eysenck 1954, 182-5).

Another account that gives particular importance to the structure of beliefs prior to entering politics is Erikson's (1959). This explanation begins with a theory of the development of the Self in which the transition from adolescence to youth is regarded as the most critical stage in the construction of personal identity (Erikson 1980; cf. also Alwin 1994)⁴⁰. During this «identity crisis» human beings are confronted with the issue of their own place in the world⁴¹. This confrontation is most dramatic for future political leaders. Their «identity crisis» is marked by a search for coherent solutions to the great issues of mankind. Choosing to become politically active results from the discovery of an ideology that solves such puzzles. As a logical corollary of Erikson's theory of leadership development, success in overcoming strong ideological uncertainty and confusion during adolescence may be seen as a distinctive trait, not only in the formation of leaders but also the large category of prospective political men.

Overlapping to a substantial extent with the concept of self-esteem is that of «locus of control» (Rotter 1966). Rotter distinguishes between the polar types of «Internal» (I) and «External» (E) individuals - those who feel in control of their destiny and those who feel at the mercy of

⁴⁰ In Erikson's view this is not the only phase of self-questioning that individuals must face in life: every stage of the lifecourse is characterized by a specific crisis. Erikson identifies eight such crises.

⁴¹ Adolescents, says Erikson (1980, 109), must trace the boundaries of their self-recognition - i.e., what «connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others».

the outside world. In contrast to Lasswell's view, this theory postulates that political ambition is likely to be proportional to the strength of the «internal» tendency within the individual personality. People engage in politics inasmuch as they see themselves capable of affecting their environment and mastering future events. A «sense of political efficacy» is then expected to be particularly high among political activists, as it turned out to be among participants in elections in a very influential work (Campbell et al. 1960). Yet evidence is, once again, contradictory. Members of self-help associations (Levens 1968) and members of black political movements in the Southern States of America (Strickland 1965) were found to score high on the I-E scale; this was not the case among other political activists (Rosen-Salling 1971; Silvern-Nakamura 1971), while black political extremists who had taken part in riots even proved to fit into the «external» type of personality (Ransford 1968; Renshon 1974)⁴².

A return to a modified version of Lasswell's psychoanalytic legacy took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Among the variety of «borderline personality organizations», the stress was placed on the narcissistic personality - the psychosis in which libido reflects back on the ego. The theoretical framework of reference (Kohut 1971; Kernberg

⁴² A factor analysis of the I-E scale has shown that the scale joins two distinct kinds of expectations, personal and political control: «A belief concerning felt mastery over the course of one's life, and a belief concerning the extent to which the individual citizen is deemed capable of exerting an impact on political institutions» (Mirels 1970, 226).

1975) was not originally associated with political psychology⁴³. However, it was subsequently extended to the study of leaders such as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Volkan 1981; Volkan-Itzkowitz 1984) and Oswald Mosley (McIntyre 1983). In these cases, the drive to enter politics and the ambition of succeeding in it are held to be rooted in a peculiar and relatively unfrequent form of Oedipus complex, in which the child's «mechanism for remedying frustration and incompleteness is to attach himself to an ideal object (Kernberg) or idealized parental image (Kohut), [that] is the fantasized image of the all powerful, all knowing, all giving, all loving parent» (Post 1986, 678). In particular, according to the Kohutian theory, the source of the child's personality deficit would be the mother's «inflated self», which leads her to distance herself from the husband and to impose on the son her hopes to fulfil some idealized aspiration. In more psychoanalytic terms, «the oedipal complex is of a particular kind since identification tends to be with the mother's unrealistic aspirations (incorporated in the grandiose self) rather than with the father» (Brown-Thomas 1986, 57). The son is attracted to politics as a way of gaining the mother's affection by means of his power. Yet, promising as they are in giving new substance to the original Lasswellian insight, the accounts of political ambition based on the narcissistic personality or other psychic maladjustments still lack wider empirical

⁴³ Kohut (1978, ch. 46) directly applied his theories on narcissism to messianic and charismatic personalities, but only as a special case of an all-encompassing approach.

confirmation. Moreover, they tend to be grounded on data that lend themselves to an almost unending elasticity of interpretation. As in all psychoanalytic research, their supposed evidence refers to subconscious events that occurred during infancy, which is practically impossible to check in a reliable way (for even stronger criticisms, cf. Gellner 1985). As a consequence, not all the theories reviewed in this section will be tested in the empirical part of this study.

The search for psychopatology at the root of political ambition is without a testable basis not only because of methodological difficulties, but also because of the ill-defined scope of the theories. Are they meant to cover any kind of political ambition? In fact, they seem more convincing in explaining the cases of exceptional leaders and adherents of extremist movements than in accounting for political self-selection in normal times and at lower levels.

Dissatisfaction with the existing personality-based approaches to political ambition is widespread even within the discipline of political psychology (e.g., Knutson 1973, 46-7; Sniderman 1975, 144; Hermann 1977, 14-5; Burns 1978, 13-5). The conclusion that «efforts to demonstrate the relevance of predispositions in recruitment have been neither numerous nor very successful» (Czudnowski 1975, 211) still holds. A more complex and yet unknown interaction of psychological and sociological processes is required to account for the development of the *homo politicus*.

3.2. Youth Activists: A Challenge to the Personality Accounts

The existing theories of political self-selection were shaken by the rise of youth movements in the late 1960s. The unforeseen mobilization of thousands of volunteers in newly formed political groups challenged the existing views about the causes of individual activism. Although with new claims and style and refusing the preexisting opportunity structure, youth activists placed themselves on the political scene and performed political roles. How and why did they join the movements? What differentiated them from non-active peers?

Many pieces of research of the time failed to trace a fully-fledged picture (e.g., Zinn 1965; Draper 1965; Ehle 1965; Newfield 1966; Coles 1967). Others (e.g., Lipset 1972; Oberschall 1993, 320-3) focused on the macrosociological antecedents of movement formation (such as the lack of elite circulation and the baby boom in the second half of the 1940s), and therefore paid little attention to the sources of individual involvement. However, those studies which faced this question squarely found considerable evidence against the Freud-Lasswell perspective on political self-selection. Far from obeying some psychological need for symbolic parricide, young activists seemed to express a motivation to put into practice their parents' values (Solomon-Fishman 1964; Flacks 1967; Keniston 1968; Block et al. 1969; Cowdry et al. 1970; Braungart 1972; Lewis-Kraut 1972; Wood-Ng 1980; McAdam 1988). In other words, they «were not rebelling against their parents but were carrying out

the political orientations learned in the home» (Braungart-Braungart 1990, 294). This finding was variously interpreted, giving rise to a still open debate about the more general theme of the development of political activism.

At first, some authors tried to adjust the psychoanalytic theory to this finding. In particular, Keniston (1968) analyzed the infancy and the family dynamics of the life of the leaders of the 1967 Vietnam Summer Movement. To come to grips with the apparent continuity between the fathers' and sons' principles, and at the same time maintain a psychoanalytic framework, Keniston elaborated an *ad hoc* theory. He argued that the young political leaders were motivated by an unconscious will to repair their father's inability to live according to the principles which he taught his children. Thus, in a sense, Keniston sees activism as a way to overcome the Oedipus complex by showing the father that the son is superior to him as he is able to act consistently with his beliefs. Suggestive as it is, the theory is nonetheless poorly tested. Even worse, within Keniston's limited sample (seventeen individuals interviewed in depth) there are some cases of politically active parents that apparently do not fit the theory.

After Keniston, interpretations of recruitment to youth movements distance themselves from a conception of political ambition as an effect of some psychic process. Almost all are based on comparisons of the family background of young activists and nonactivists. They share the idea that being born into a "special" position in the social structure

counts more than being caught in a "special" unconscious syndrome during childhood. Profound divergences arise, however, about the definition of "position in the social structure". Until recently, these positions used to be defined in terms of social attributes (e.g., class, gender). Explanations based on such a traditional sociological approach «hinge on discovering that persons with similar attributes behave similarly in response to shared norms» (Wellman-Berkowitz 1988, 3). By contrast, a socio-structural approach has emerged. It assumes that positions in the social structure are defined by typical configurations of social relationships. Individual action, thus, would be better explained in terms of social network constraints. The two sociological paradigms provide us with alternative accounts of the origins of political activism. We now turn to an examination of each of them.

3.3. The Importance of Social Origins

Political recruitment is an instance of the process of matching people to jobs. As the analysis of this process defines the agenda of status attainment research, several studies of political recruitment happen to share the basic assumption of much if not all status attainment research: social origins determine occupational achievements.

Without a doubt social origins count: evidence throughout the world shows a strong association between background variables and occupational destinies. Existing research, however, seems more preoccupied with *how much* than with *why* this is the case. Social mobility tables - the

dominant analytical tool in the field - can only record the outcomes of the process of status attainment, but they say nothing about the causal chain which leads to such outcomes⁴⁴. Inequality of opportunity, thus, is accounted for, as Boudon (1973, 13-4) lamented long ago, on the basis of factors which have been proved to be statistically significant without clarifying the way in which they act as «generating mechanisms». In spite of the extensive empirical work in the meanwhile, twenty years after Boudon's lament «we have many more coherent findings now about how specific variables affect mobility or attainment than we have coherent stories about why (and under what circumstances) those results obtain» (Baron 1994, 390). The basic problem remains: why do social origins matter?

Social origin variables lend themselves to two types of explanations which, albeit not systematically, run through the literature. *Structuralist* explanations focus on *differential command on social resources*: social origins influence what some youths have the power to do and others not. *Culturalist* explanations underscore *differential*

⁴⁴ Some scholars of social mobility are aware of this shortcoming, up to the point of writing in the concluding page of one of the most influential works in this research area: «It would seem especially important to move down from the level of macrosociological relationships to study more immediately the social processes that are involved in class mobility or immobility: in particular, the various ways in which members of one generation in fact apply their resources in order to enhance the mobility chances of their successors» (Erikson-Goldthorpe 1992, 397). To shed light on the dynamics of these processes, in the main two methods - «cumulative mobility tables» including complete work-history data (Featherman-Selbee 1988) and «social genealogies» (Bertaux 1995) - have been proposed hitherto. For an assessment and an overview of similar methodological understandings, see Dex (1991).

aspirations: social origins affect what young individuals tend to aspire to⁴⁵.

The most prominent structuralist accounts of the importance of social origins are probably Bourdieu's and Passeron's (1964) «cultural capital theory» and Boudon's (1973) «economic constraint theory»⁴⁶. While in status attainment research the influence of social origins is frequently framed in a structuralist perspective (e.g., Treiman-Yip 1989, 376; Ganzeboom et al. 1991, 296)⁴⁷, such a perspective has been substantially neglected in the literature on political recruitment.

The culturalist accounts of the impact of social origins on youth's status attainment argue that the younger members of different classes adopt occupational aspirations consistent with the status of their reference groups, among which there are usually their parents. The core of this

⁴⁵ Within each of these broad theoretical perspectives there are a number of more specific hypotheses which have been developed to account for occupational or educational stratification. In fact, research on educational inequalities seems to have stimulated theorizing to a larger extent (cf. Boudon 1973, 56-62; Gambetta 1987, 73 ff.; Blossfeld-Shavit 1993, 6-7).

⁴⁶ The cultural capital theory posits that children from lower-class families do not acquire at home those symbolic abilities which are prized by school teachers and employers; they tend therefore to be handicapped in educational and occupational contests. The economic constraint theory contends that lower-class offsprings are disadvantaged since they have to face higher costs than middle-upper class youth in the competition for entering high status educational and professional careers.

⁴⁷ Many also conveniently switch from one type of explanation to the other. Goldthorpe, for instance, refers sometimes to «differing degrees of advantage or disadvantage [...] in terms of economic, cultural, and social resources» (Erikson-Goldthorpe 1992, 302), sometimes to «normative differentiation along class lines» (*ibid.*, 17; cf. also Goldthorpe-Marshall 1992, 388). The two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

theory, which has several variants, is that «any successful socialization tends to persuade agents to collaborate with their own destiny» (Bourdieu 1988, 216)⁴⁸.

According to this last view, the decision to enter politics would correspond to parental and environmental influences in defining the young's life prospects. Weaving together the threads of the research on youth activism in the U.S., the following passage presents a summary of the accounts of political ambition based on a culturalist theory of status attainment:

«The findings of these studies are [...] best interpreted by recognizing that the childhood experiences of activists were imbedded [sic] in a particular *subculture* in the American middle class - that is, a tradition of belief and everyday practice, transmitted through families that tend to cluster in particular residential neighborhoods, and that have over time established an institutional framework for inculcating their shared perspectives. I refer to the *subculture* of what might be called the "intelligentsia" [...]. Young people growing up in families embedded in the subculture of the intelligentsia experienced two sorts of moral injunctions: first, you should devote your life in some way to social betterment; second, you are a person of outstanding potential who ought to fulfill your unique promise in a significant way. [...] I think that it is plausible that what was found for student activists in the sixties can be more broadly generalized - i.e., socialization of many kinds of political activism in many historical contexts is often best understood as an aspect of identity-formation occurring within particular subcultural contexts» (Flacks 1990, 284-5).

⁴⁸ The most elaborated attempt to link origin and attainment through socialization to differential aspirations appears to be the «Wisconsin model» (Sewell et al. 1969), which can be summarized as follows: «Significant others are seen as having an influence on the goals of the young person, and these goals are viewed as instrumental in the attainment process. The theory anticipates that the encouragement by significant others will vary according to the social position and demonstrated ability of the child, and that this encouragement will affect the level to which he aspires» (Kerckhoff 1976, 369). The theoretical antecedents and successive specifications of the Wisconsin model are illustrated in Haller (1982, 9 ff.).

This account differs substantially from psychopathological ones. Although psycho-cultural elements are part of the picture, the decisive influence is not attributed to specific events of the primary socialization, but to its occurrence in given subcultures. Normal socialization in certain environments forges youth's aspirations in a way that makes political activity interesting and appealing.

In particular, Flack's account seems to fall into the «crystallization model» of the development of political activism (Merelman-King 1986). This holds that prospective activists are subject to more intense injections of political orientations («inculcation» would seem the right word to stress in Flack's quotation), and therefore nurture stronger attachments to these ideal contents. Briefly, the activist can be described as an «over-socialized» individual who «finds it difficult to accept the non-fulfilment of values» (Tapper 1976, 141-2) which he sustains firmly from the adolescent years onwards⁴⁹.

Elaborating on this, we can extend the account to the special case of party activism. The actor of the «crystallization model» may be expected to be attracted by expressing his political «impulse» in a political party when he finds a tight correspondence between his and the party's

⁴⁹ In this view, radical activism is a moral response to the disillusionment of experiencing the failure of the society to work the way in which one has been taught it ought. Therefore, apart from its psychoanalytic inferences, Keniston's explanation can fit into this explanation as well.

value patterns. Since in principle parties propose themselves as groups based on structured and consistent sets of values, in the case of party activists «crystallization» refers to both the stability and the consistency of the activist's values.

A softer image, corresponding to a «sensitization model» (Merelman-King 1986), is proposed by Prewitt (1965) in order to account for the vast amount of evidence reporting the family's transmission of political activism (cf. also Wright 1971, 106; Czudnowski 1975, 188-90; Putnam 1976, 76-7; Perkins 1986; Sherkat-Blocker 1994). This view maintains that «if the family or other authority figures are politically involved, they are likely to pass on that interest to youth under care»; the adhesion to this interest derives from the child's acceptance of «political activity as a normal part of their [elders'] life-style» (Prewitt 1965, 107 and 109).

As the stress on life-style rather than on values distinguishes the «sensitization» from the «crystallization» hypothesis, they can be framed within two analytically distinct but empirically overlapping forms of parental political socialization, which Dalton (1982) calls the «attitudinal and the social-milieu pathways»:

«The attitudinal pathway [...] is based on direct interpersonal value transfer (through imitation, reinforcement, explicit education, and similar processes), with children internalizing parental attitudes as a result of these experiences. [This pathway] involves the learning of broad attitudes which are deeply embedded in an individual's belief system; these attitudes should be resistant to later-life change. [Through the social-milieu pathway], parents transmit certain social characteristics to their offsprings and place them in a social milieu which can

influence attitudes independent of parental views" (*ibid.*, 140 and 154).

An attempt to measure the effect of various parental characteristics on the political participation⁵⁰ of their offsprings was made by Beck and Jennings (1982), who used path analysis with a large panel of young Americans and their parents interviewed at eight years distance. Although these authors claim that their empirical findings support the view that active participation in politics depends ultimately on some mechanism of political socialization at an early age⁵¹, their conclusion is cautious and rather vague in relation to the ways in which family culture influences youth activism:

«Parent civic orientations *may* set the tone of family discourse on politics. Parent interest *probably* promotes discussion of politics in the home, awakening the child's interest in the world of politics. Parents' political knowledge *can* enhance the child's own understanding of politics in these discussions. Less cognitively based orientations, such as political efficacy, *probably* are transmitted less consciously by parents, but they are no less likely to be included in the attitudinal baggage the young carry with them into adulthood» (Beck-Jennings 1982, 98; italics added).

Using the same data, a subsequent study compared activists to nonactivists more specifically (Merelman-King 1986). Three main predicting factors of future activism among 18 years old individuals were identified: the

⁵⁰ Clearly political participation is a broader phenomenon than political activism. Nonetheless, logically the conditions that affect the former should be part of the explanation of the latter.

⁵¹ The same result is obtained by Sigel and Hoskins (1981) in an analogous study dealing with a sample of younger individuals.

intention to become active at an older age (92% fulfilled it eight years later), a higher similarity with parents' and friends' party identification (85% cast the same vote as these two reference groups), and a stronger sense of political efficacy. Evidence also showed that activists tended to change their views with time more than apathetics, but constantly toward firmer and more convinced statements than they had expressed at a younger age. Since «activists displayed a unique pattern of political attitudes as early as the age of 18» (*ibid.*, 487), Merelman and King sustain the primacy of early learning in the development of the ambition to participate actively in politics. The culturalist explanation of the importance of social origins in the attainment of a political activist status would be re-affirmed. However, why do future activists have such a «unique pattern of political attitudes» at the age of 18? Merelman and King are not able to attribute the political activists' difference to any specific socializing agent, event or mechanism. Therefore, their analysis is incomplete in relation to a fundamental theoretical point.

Globally, the results of the existing research on the relations between social origins and political ambition are poor. In particular, they provide us with under-determined models. Belonging to some social categories (e.g., being male, educated, and from a bourgeois family) may be found to be almost necessary conditions for becoming politically active. Yet they are not sufficient, since so many male,

educated, and bourgeois youths do not affiliate with a political group⁵².

3.4. *The Importance of Networks*

A different picture of the roots of political activism is drawn by those scholars who propose a social network approach to the problem:

«In trying to understand why some young people join political groups while others from a similar background do not, we found that while family political socialization and family culture may influence the thrust of offsprings' politics, actual entry into political groups appears to have more to do with opportunity structures - that political activist groups are available to join and that direct contact is made by friends inviting or urging the young person to affiliate with the political group» (Braungart-Braungart 1990, 297)⁵³.

Originally, this was a common and substantial, although theoretically understated, result in some American studies of local political recruitment of the 1960s (Bowman-Boynton

⁵² Some scholars underscore another aspect of social origins which can affect political activism: birth-order. Various hypotheses have been elaborated to account for the evidence showing a majority of first-borns among power-holders, although the methodological validity of these studies has been judged «sufficiently defective» (Somit et al. 1993, 151). Psychologists have stressed the higher concern of first-borns for their younger sons and daughters, which can successively extend itself to the rest of society (Stewart 1977, 211). In other words, first-borns would be subjected to a stronger primary socialization, so that in highly politicized families they may be pushed more towards political involvement. This can be called the «conformism» hypothesis. Meanwhile, sociologists of education have observed that «younger sibs and children in large families have less adult attention, which produces weaker educational outcomes» (Coleman 1988, 112; *contra*, Hauser-Sewell 1985). More generally, first-borns may have the advantage of capturing a prior control not only of parents' attention, but also of inheritable family political resources. This can be seen as a «priority of heritage» hypothesis.

⁵³ The concept of 'opportunity structure' is often used by this approach without reference to either Seligman or Schlesinger (cf. § 2). In fact, this terminological choice is quite unfortunate.

1966; Schwartz 1969; Prewitt 1970; more recently, Ehrenhalt 1991, 31-2). For instance, 68% of Prewitt's councilmen openly admitted that «their political recruitment [was due] to influence of other persons», and «nearly a quarter of the councilmen report[ed] that councilmen and other local officials helped shape and nourish their ambitions for political office» (Prewitt 1970, 111). There is reason to believe that self-declarations even underestimated reality, because «persons like to think of themselves as "self-starters", a self-image especially attractive to politicians, which precludes dependence on others» (*ibid.*). Additional evidence supports this argument: more than half the respondents said that they knew «very well» some «incumbent councilman prior to running for office» (*ibid.*, 113). The author's contention was that

«working your way through the channels leading to public office is simply not something you "just decide to do". For most councilmen, it is the result of social experiences and personal contacts which draw them into and up through the network of relationships which control - whether by design or not - access to political office. [...] We can conclude that the recruitment of councilmen is affected by the *sponsoring* and *co-optive* strategies of established leadership» (*ibid.*, 112 and 119; italics added).

On the basis of this evidence, in his summary of the literature for the term 'political recruitment and careers' in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Marvick (1968, 278) writes that «the importance of sponsors - "who you know" rather than "what you know" - cannot be discounted in political recruitment».

Subsequently, the second wave of inquiries on student activism in the 1970s and 1980s also proved that connections to family members and friends favorable to political involvement decisively affected the chances of being involved (e.g., Zygmunt 1972; Turner-Killian 1972, 365; Useem 1975, 11-8; McCarthy-Zald 1977, 1214-5). A secondary analysis of a large set of previous investigations suggested that «the network channel is the richest source of movement recruits» (Snow et al. 1980, 790)⁵⁴. More precisely, «findings indicate that the probability of being recruited into a particular movement is largely a function of two conditions: (1) links to one or more movement members through a preexisting or emergent interpersonal tie; and (2) the absence of countervailing networks» (*ibid.*, 798). The fulfilment of these two conditions determines the individual's «structural availability» and accounts for «differential recruitment» to a (broadly speaking) political activity⁵⁵. Thus, «“structural availability” for social movement participation renders “attitudinal affinity” to a movement completely irrelevant» (Emirbayer-Goodwin 1994, 1431). What counts is the socio-structural location in a particular network of prior participants.

⁵⁴ This hypothesis has also been validated as regards recruitment for religious movements (Stark-Bainbridge 1980; Ebaugh-Vaughn 1984) and, albeit less systematically, other forms of political participation (Verba et al. 1995, 17).

⁵⁵ As noted, «recruitment explanations [that] stress structural availability [are] a variation on the differential association hypothesis popularized by criminologists two generations ago» (Knoke 1990, 69).

Tests of this hypothesis were made possible by the application of network analysis concepts in the social movements literature especially (e.g., Walsh-Warland 1983; Rosenthal et al. 1985; Briët et al. 1987; Della Porta 1988; Cable 1992). However, activism is clearly defined as a full-time individual commitment to a political group (thus being closer to our study object) only in McAdam's studies of Freedom Summer - a civil rights organization mainly formed by American youth in 1964 (McAdam 1986 and 1988; McAdam-Fernandez 1990; McAdam-Paulsen 1993). From a theoretical point of view, McAdam's works also tries to respond to the criticism addressed to the network accounts of recruitment - namely, to posit the causes of participation entirely outside the actor and thus reduce the interplay between social forces and recruits to a mechanical stimulus-response model (Wallis-Bruce 1982; *contra*, Snow et al. 1983; cf. also Klandermans-Oegema 1987; Marwell et al. 1988; Kriesi 1993). In order to overcome this structural reductionism, McAdam shifts the focus of research from «recruitment networks» to «micromobilization contexts» (Friedman-McAdam 1992; McAdam-Paulsen 1993), seeking to assess which, how and why prior social relations attract activists into movements and organizations. This implies a change of the independent variable from that of «structural tie» to that of «significant other». Thereby, those «personological» [sic] and «attitudinal» elements (McAdam-Fernandez 1990, 1) that had previously and perhaps too rapidly been dismissed are brought back in.

Borrowing the symbolic interactionist notion of «identity salience»⁵⁶, McAdam and Paulsen (1993, 647) propose a supply-side theory of recruitment in which the decision to become active is the result of four conditions:

«(1) The occurrence of a specific recruiting attempt, (2) the conceptualization of a tentative linkage between movement participation and identity, (3) support for that linkage from persons who normally serve to sustain the identity in question, and (4) the absence of strong opposition from others on whom other salient identities depend».

In the empirical test of their theory, these authors find that the final choice to become politically active is best explained by an explicit alignment of individuals «with a specific community or reference group» in their own accounts of the reasons for which they intended to join the movement (*ibid.*, 656). Even though in their previous works on recruitment they had emphasized the crucial effect of strong ties with other recruits, McAdam and Paulsen come to believe that prior ties «would appear to encourage activism only when they (a) reinforce the potential recruit's identification with a particular identity and (b) help to establish a strong linkage between that identity and the movement in question» (*ibid.*, 663).

This model imposes sufficiently restrictive conditions which fit with the fact that political activism is a rare

⁵⁶ «From a structural symbolic interactionist perspective [...], the self is partially composed of the social positions that an individual holds and enacts. That is, the self can be conceptualized as a set of social identities, where identities refer to positional designations assigned by others and accepted by the individual him- or herself» (Thoits 1986, 259). As these identities are organized hierarchically, some are held to be more «salient» than others for self definition (Stryker 1981; Stryker-Serpe 1994).

phenomenon. There are difficulties, however: above all, the model begs the question of why, among the many identities they can share, incipient recruits attach particular salience to the one which emerges from some ties rather than others. Introducing reference groups as independent variables only shifts the puzzle: Why does one become attached to a particular reference group instead of another⁵⁷?

A network approach, finally, may help to test whether another factor, substantially ignored by existing research, sustains political ambition: the control of a large social capital. To have a wide range of social ties can be an important instrument of personal power, as it allows the trading of those resources (information, advice, favours, support) controlled by virtue of one's social positions⁵⁸. In politics, even more than in other social fields, the volume of social ties is important regardless of with whom these ties are, as it indicates direct connections to potential voters and thus constitutes the chief instrument of patronage.

Unfortunately, agreement on the definition of «social capital» is limited. Bourdieu adopted the term in order to account for «the actual or potential resources linked to a more or less institutionalized and enduring network of

⁵⁷ A related problem is the causal ordering of the independent variables. What comes first: attachment to a reference group or to the tie which awakes an interest in that group?

⁵⁸ The general idea was already expressed by Hobbes' (1985, 150), when he noted that «to have friends, is Power: for they are strengths united».

relations of inter-knowledge and inter-acknowledgment» (1980, 2; also 1986, 248-9). Subsequently Bourdieu has written that social capital «consists of resources based on connections and group membership» (1987, 4). Coleman (1990, 302), who treats of the concept at length, offers no easier way to operationalize it when he states that «social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons»⁵⁹.

To a certain extent, this conceptual ambiguity is a result of the use of the term as an umbrella of phenomena analyzed at different levels - macro and micro (for a distinct criticism, cf. Lin 1995, 687). In the macro sense, social capital is a public good; in the micro sense, it is a private good (cf. Coleman 1988, 116-8). An operational definition of the second meaning of the concept is proposed here: social capital (SC) consists of all the support one can mobilize through available social ties. Its volume (V) is determined by the number of people that can give some (more or less large) help in some (more or less frequent) situations. Its power (P) depends on the resourcefulness (R) of the individuals included and the strength (S) of the ties linking them to ego⁶⁰. Thus: $SC = V \cdot (R \cdot S)$, or $SC = V \cdot P$.

⁵⁹ Admittedly Coleman borrows the concept from Loury (1977). Subsequent and slightly different definitions can be found in Lamont-Lareau (1988), Flap (1988, 104), Flap (1991, 6181), Putnam (1993), Meyerson (1994, 384), Anheier et al. (1995), Burt (1995).

⁶⁰ This formal definition expands on Bourdieu's insight, according to which «the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom one is connected» (1986, 249).

4. Conclusion

Analyses of recruitment are concerned with how the social order reproduces itself by managing to allocate social roles to individuals. This management occurs in two complementary ways: a) "gates" are set up to select potential incumbents for each role (the demand-side), and b) aspirations pre-distribute persons among different selection contests (the supply-side)⁶¹.

In the field of political recruitment, attention must be paid respectively to the «selective» and «self-selective» tendencies in a political system (Prewitt 1965). Both tendencies will be dealt with in succession in the following chapters. First, a demand-side analysis of the opportunity structure for the potential aspirants to legislative roles in Italy in the early 1990s will be conducted, on the basis of a slightly revised version of Schlesinger's method discussed in a previous section (§ 2.5). This will allow for an identification of the «recruitment-relevant apprenticeship positions» (Czudnowski 1975, 230) in which young politically ambitious individuals are most likely to place themselves at the start of their careers (chapter III). The characteristics of the individuals identified in this way will then be investigated (chapters IV to VII). Finally, the main supply-side theories of recruitment reviewed in this chapter will be tested and reformulated

⁶¹ In a hypothetical condition of social equilibrium, one may think of the first process as leading to the most rational use of human resources, and the second as preventing the threats of widespread frustrations because of social positions that are too sharply desired.

(chapter VIII), seeking to give an empirical answer to the basic question with which this study is concerned: What draws some young people rather than others to a political career⁶²?

⁶² Statistically, and in more operational terms, the problem is the following: «Given the existence of two populations A and B; given a random sample of individuals which we know for certain come from A, and another random sample which we know for certain come from B; how do we set up a rule to allocate further individuals, of whose origin we are uncertain, to the correct population?» (Kendall 1980, 145). Discriminant analysis and logistic regression are the most appropriate technical solutions. Yet logistic regression is not sensitive to the strict assumptions of discriminant analysis - that is, equality of the group covariance matrices and multivariate normality of the exogenous variables (Klecka 1980; Lachenbruch 1975; Maxwell 1977, 94 ff.; Norusis 1993, 1-45). Although it is «unlikely that the two methods will give markedly different results», statisticians suggest the use of logistic regression «especially when many of the independent variables are qualitative» (Press-Wilson 1978, 705).

CHAPTER III

FINDING THE ENTRY POINTS OF POLITICAL CAREERS IN ITALY IN THE EARLY 1990S

1. Monitoring Political Careers for Locating Ambition

A variety of studies highlight the existence of specifically political «career lines»¹ in the Italian occupational structure (e.g., Cotta 1979; Schizzerotto 1993; Bettin-Magnier 1995). Scholars of the "First" Italian Republic also used to outline these career lines as typically: a) initiated within party structures, and b) at an early age. In the next chapters, we will assume that these two regularities not only described the main features of the job trajectories of the existing political elite, but also functioned as guidelines for its prospective members. Ambitious would-be politicians are likely to monitor past careers to put themselves on the fast track. As Schlesinger (1966, 9) surmises, «if lieutenant governors have become governors in the past, then men who want to become governors will first seek to become lieutenant governors»².

¹ The concept of 'career line' (or 'job trajectory') can be defined as «a work history that is common to a portion of the labor force» (Spilerman 1977, 551).

² The assumption that individual ambitions are normally affected by observed structural constraints about career opportunities has been discussed in greater detail in chapter II (§ 2.5).

In more general terms,

«for aspirants seeking the path to the political summit, distinguishing thoroughfares from dead ends is a practical concern. Should a politically ambitious youth in America aim first for a job in the state legislature, or the federal bureaucracy, or a prestigious law firm? Should a would-be Soviet leader set his sights on the state administration, or the party's "agit-prop" apparatus, or the secret police? Should an ambitious Latin American enter local politics, or the army, or some multinational corporation?» (Putnam 1976, 47).

In Italy, as in most democracies, parliament is likely to be «the initial summit of ambition» (Rose 1987, 73) for any political aspirant. Evidence in this chapter will demonstrate that by far the most common entry point³ of the career line leading to MP status in the early 1990s in Italy was activism in a party youth organization. On the basis of this precedent, we expect young aspirants to take their first political jobs in a party youth organization more than in any other kind of political group⁴.

The importance of youth party office as an entry point for political careers will be shown on the basis of various evidence. Firstly, we will screen where (§ 2) and when (§ 3) Italian parliamentarians of the 11th post-war legislature

³ An 'entry point' is defined as «a job in the career line held by a significant proportion of persons without prior employment in another position in the trajectory» (Spilerman 1977, 560; in fact, this author prefers the more rhetorical term 'entry portal'). As a synonym, the concept of 'apprenticeship position' will be used to indicate a «gateway to political office» (Prewitt 1970, 12; cf. also Czudnowski 1975, 230; Matthews 1989, 92-3). In a different sense, apprenticeship as a type of political socialization is analyzed in Dawson et al. (1977, 100-4).

⁴ Although first jobs are often studied for predicting subsequent career achievements (cf. Lipset-Malm 1955), this is not our research interest. It does not matter whether young party activists are actually bound to become professional politicians when older. What matters is that they expect so.

(1992-1994) spent their political apprenticeship. Secondly, we will identify the achievements in the early 1990s of the youth party leaders of the mid-1970s (§ 4).

The first part of the chapter is based on a dataset of careers of Italian MPs, mainly drawn from their official biographies and from party sources⁵. The available data concern 826 (85.3%) out of 968 parliamentarians⁶. The second part of the chapter relies on a different dataset describing the status attainments in the 1990s of the 435 past-members of the ruling bodies of the party youth organizations of the DC, PCI, and PSI during the period 1974-77⁷.

⁵ The biographies of Italian MPs are contained in an official yearbook: *I deputati e i senatori dell'undicesimo Parlamento repubblicano*, Edizioni Italiane, Roma, 1992 (commonly known as *La Navicella*). Although somewhat deceptive as the only source, this volume is an useful starting point for any research on political elites in Italy, provided other sources (party papers, official party files, and informants) are taken into account. A few cases have been excluded from the analysis where it has not been possible to assess a priority of institutional recruitment (e.g., whether party or local government offices came first).

⁶ Most of the MPs whose first political position is not known probably followed a party-centered career. The bulk of them were likely to have had experience of politics in local party organizations, both in the youth and the "adult" sections. They have not been included in the dataset, however.

⁷ This dataset records the names of the members of the Young Christian Democrats' (MGDC), Young Communists' (FGCI), and Young Socialists' (FGS) national councils (*consiglio nazionale*) and executive committees (*comitato centrale* or *direzione nazionale*) between 1974 and 1977. These names were subsequently checked in the 1991 and 1994 editions of two Italian «who's who» - that is, the *Annuario Generale Italiano* (better known as the «Guida Monaci») and the *Guida delle Regioni*. This procedure was supplemented by information from party activists, who examined the individual findings to avoid mistaken identities. These informants also pointed out that many of the individuals who are not mentioned in the «who's who» were however still involved in active politics in the early 1990s (either in local party offices, or in the government of smaller towns). Therefore, the figures given in § 4 are likely to be indicators of political professionalism *ex defecto*.

2. The Entry Points of the Political Careers of Italian MPs (1992-1994)

Half the MPs elected to «the last parliament» of the «First» Italian Republic (Ricolfi 1994a) began their political life in a party position. More precisely, the most common entry point into politics was an office in a party youth organization (table 1).

Table 1: Entry points of the political careers of Italian MPs (1992-94)

	N	%
Youth Party ^a	253	30.6
Local Government ^b	240	29.1
Party	158	19.1
Interest Group ^c	67	8.1
Public Authority ^d	37	4.5
Association ^e	36	4.4
None	35	4.2
Total	826	100.0

- a Including those who held office in religious and student youth associations
- b Seats in ward, municipal, provincial, regional councils
- c Membership of the executive board (local or national) of trade unions and professional orders
- d Membership of the executive board (local or national) of a public enterprise, hospital, health and economic development agency or commission, and the like (usually bodies of *sottogoverno* composed by party nominees)
- e Membership of the executive board of a national association (e.g., environmental, feminist, antiabortion)

Success in local elections was the stepping-stone of the political careers of almost 30% of parliamentarians⁸.

⁸ The importance of a political experience at the local level has diminished in Italy since the earlier legislatures. Globally, 58.2% of the 1992 MPs were elected to a local council before entering Parliament

Yet, the importance of this *filière* of recruitment must be qualified. On the one hand, it was typical of backbenchers: only 11% of the former or current ministers and party leaders elected to parliament became politically active in a local council - more or less the same proportion as in past legislatures (Cotta 1979, 259). On the other hand, access to local government offices was almost impossible without preliminary allegiance to party committees in the "First" Republic - witness the fact that 94.2% in 1987 and still 87.8% in 1993 of Italian mayors were party members (Bettin-Magnier 1989, 211; Bettin 1996).

Entry into politics via unions, lobbies, associations, or *sottogoverno* (appointments to public authorities) was the case for 17% of the MPs. But, again, practically every appointment to public or semi-public authority was made by parties, and in some cases parties also had a say in the appointment to top positions in dependent associations. It was very rare, finally, to enter the Chamber or the Senate without any previous political experience: this was the case for only 4% of the MPs. «Cross-over political careers» (Herzog 1975) based on extra-political prestige were totally atypical in Italy⁹.

(49.1% had been municipal councillors, 14.6% municipal *assessori*, 16.3% mayors, 14.5% provincial councillors, 16.7% regional councillors at least once). These figures are appreciably lower than the corresponding ones for 1948-1972 and 1979 parliamentarians (Cotta 1979, 171; Guadagnini 1984, 604-8).

⁹ Differences in the channels of first political recruitment were also significantly linked to a number of other characteristics of parliamentarians. For instance, women were drawn more often from associations (which became more important for recruiting candidates in the 1994 general election [Censis 1994]), whereas party youth organizations and public authorities promoted almost exclusively men (in

In 1992 the «partyiness of political recruitment» is confirmed to be the strongest characteristic of Italian parliamentarians, as it was for their predecessors since 1946 (Cotta 1979; Guadagnini 1983 and 1993). Most often party selection took place in the youth organizations.

Table 2: Entry points of Italian MPs representing different parties (in row %)

ENTRY POINTS							
	Youth party	Adult party	Local gov'nmt	Public auth'ity	Lobby	Ass'ion	Others
PARTY	31	19	29	5	8	4	4
DC ^a	37	18	26	6	7	4	2
PDS ^b	26	27	28	2	9	4	4
PSI ^c	30	18	32	5	9	2	4
PRI-PLI ^d	33	14	25	5	10	3	10
LEAGUE ^e	3	24	47	5	7	7	7
MSI ^f	63	2	26	5	2	0	2
OTHERS	20	16	28	2	8	18	8

N=826

- a Democrazia Cristiana
- b Partito Democratico della Sinistra (former Italian Communist Party [PCI]); MPs of Rifondazione Comunista (RC) are also included in this category
- c Partito Socialista Italiano; MPs of Partito Socialdemocratico Italiano (PSDI) are also included in this category
- d Partito Repubblicano Italiano; Partito Liberale Italiano
- e Lega Nord
- f Movimento Sociale Italiano

95% of the cases); MPs recruited from union and party structures were less educated than their colleagues who started in a public authority (82% graduates) and youth party organizations (74% graduates). Recruits from the leadership of associations were more frequently elected in Northern regions (54%), as well as MPs without any political experience (48%); among the parliamentarians launched by union and public authority positions, only 12% were elected in the Centre of Italy.

In terms of early political careers, recruitment patterns of MPs in the main parties of the "First" Republic (DC, PSI, liberal parties [PRI, PSDI, PLI] and former PCI) were very similar (table 2)¹⁰. Regardless of their party affiliation, about half of the parliamentarians had first experienced the tenure of some political office in a party structure (47% in the PRI and PLI, 48% in the PSI and PSDI, 53% in the PDS and *Rifondazione Comunista*, 54% in the DC)¹¹.

A different picture emerges from the analysis of the early career pathways of the MPs elected in more marginal parties. The right-wing party, the MSI, was the expression of a well-structured subculture which required of its representatives long-standing allegiance and militancy (Ignazi 1989; Tarchi 1995). Thus, 63% of MSI parliamentarians had begun their career at a very early stage in the party youth organization¹². The *Lega Nord*

¹⁰ This similarity among the different parties was a new characteristic of parliamentary recruitment. In 1979, for instance, almost 75% of the Communist MPs had started either in an adult or a youth party office, whilst less than 30% of the Christian Democrats had followed this career path (Guadagnini 1983, 287). Such a career convergence may be regarded as a clue to the progressive homogeneization of the parliamentary class in the 1980s.

¹¹ Not only is the share of party recruits practically equal among the MPs of the major parties, but so is the proportion of those coming from other political origins. The number of representatives who began from local politics varies between 25% and 32%; those from interest groups (unions, professional lobbies, and so on) between 7% and 10%; those from public authorities between 2% and 6%; those from civic associations between 2% and 4%. Altogether, in each of these parties the parliamentary group seemed to be formed by one third of former young party recruits, about one fifth of party veterans (mostly from local sections and federations), about one quarter of local councillors, about one tenth of individuals trained in the defence of corporate interests, and, occasionally, a few prestigious non-political figures.

¹² In particular, when the former youth party secretary Gianfranco Fini became party leader, he was able to reward his generation of youth party sub-leaders by helping them to be elected to parliament. As a

proposed itself as the protector of local autonomy; correspondingly, 47% of the MPs in the League entered politics from local government.

3. The Timing of the Political Apprenticeship of Italian MPs

Studies of the Italian parliaments of the 1970s have shown that MPs used to begin their political career early (Cotta 1979, 176 ff.; Guadagnini 1983, 287; Di Palma-Cotta 1986, 57). This was still the case in the 1990s. Affiliation to political parties continued to occur in the years of late adolescence, and offices were already taken in the early adult years. The mean age at which parliamentarians stated to have had their first political office was 26¹³; 55.8% of them had it when 25 years old or younger. We will refer to these MPs as "early starters".

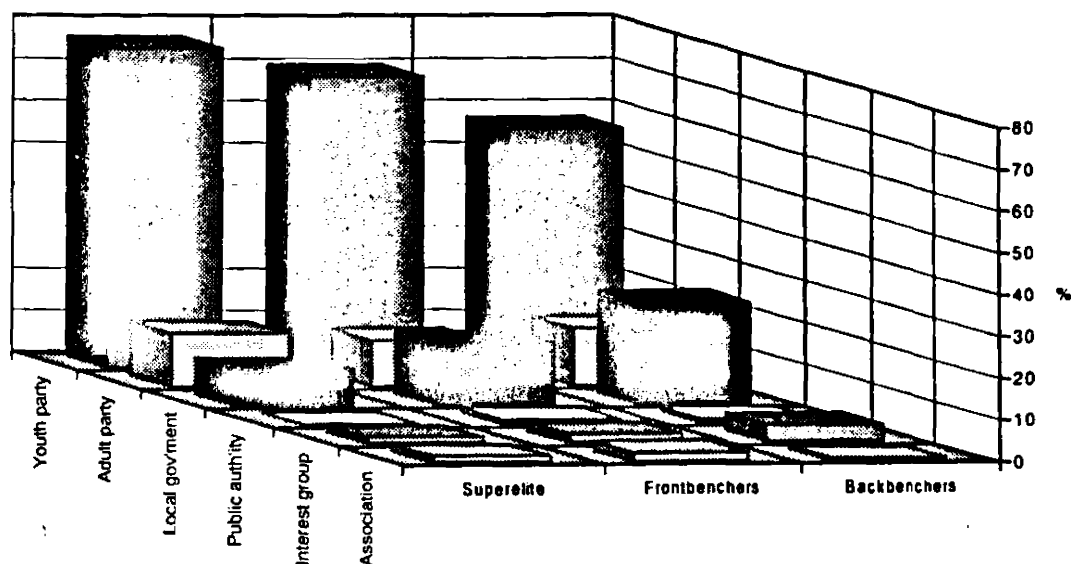
"Early starters" deserve special attention: they are precisely the reference group for the politically ambitious

consequence, in 1992 83% of the MPs under 45 years of age in the MSI had held office either in the *Fronte della Gioventù* (the youth section of the MSI) or in the right-wing university student movement (FUAN).

¹³ On average, for those who began their political career in a public non-elective authority (e.g., health councils [USL] or public transport boards), the age of entry into politics was 33; it was 31 for those who learnt the rudiments of politics in associations or interest groups; it was 28 for those who began in local government; finally, it was 26.5 for those who first held an office in the party, and just 22 for those who first held an office in the youth organization of the party. The younger the aspirant politician was, the more "ideological" and the less "administrative" was his first political experience. Indeed, youth parties have always been more preoccupied with ideology than their adult counterparts, not to speak of the other political institutions considered here. Their main activities were the organization of debates and rallies, the publication of brochures and papers, and proselitism.

youth who form the object of this research. Within this category of MPs, former youth party activists constitute the large majority (63.4%). Moreover, if "early starters" are divided into "backbenchers", "frontbenchers", and "superelite"¹⁴, the share of former youth party activists increases with parliamentary power (figure 1).

Figure 1: The entry points of "early starters" MPs by their parliamentary power



N = 399

Youth parties have been the points of entry of more than 75% of the "early starters" who reached the status of minister, party national leader, or president of a chamber

¹⁴ These groups are based on the highest political office ever held: the "Superelite" includes MPs who were serving or had served as ministers, president of a chamber of parliament, national party leaders, or union secretaries (this operational definition differs from Calise and Mannheimer's [1982]); "Frontbenchers" include those who were or had been chairman or vice-chairman of a parliamentary committee, or junior ministers; "Backbenchers" refer to all the others.

of parliament. The chances of success associated with any other stepping-stone to political life are comparatively negligible. Thus, individuals who take up a political career in their twenties should value youth party offices as by far the most favourable entry points for reaching the summit of Italian politics.

Table 3: Age of entry into active politics of MPs from different parties (in row %)

PARTY	AGE	
	Under 25 56	Over 25 44
DC	62	38
PDS, RC	61	39
PSI, PSDI	60	40
LEGA NORD	15	85
PRI, PLI	49	51
MSI	61	39
Others	42	58

N = 552

In the 1948-1972 period, 65% of the MPs of the PCI, 48% of those of the PSI, and 33% of those of the DC had held a party office before the age of twenty-five (Cotta 1979, 179). From the mid-1970s onwards, as these parties began to give rise to a covert form of consociationalism (Pizzorno 1993 and 1995)¹⁵, their recruitment patterns tended to converge (Di Palma-Cotta 1986, 57). At the beginning of the

¹⁵ Analyses of the behaviour of political elites in the "First Republic" in terms of consociationalism can also be found in Calise (1993), Amato (1994, 227), Fabbrini (1994), Revelli (1994). A step toward considering post-war Italy as a case of consociationalism (under the revised label of «consensus democracy») was already taken by Lijphart (1984, 211 ff.).

1990s, the DC, the PDS (former PCI), and the PSI seemed to prefer to recruit parliamentarians who were already seriously committed to politics when still very young (table 3). On average, these MPs' *début* into active politics occurred when they were 24 years old¹⁶.

On the other hand, representatives of the *Lega Nord* had become active in politics at the age of 38¹⁷. In all cases, entry into parliament of the representatives of the League required a short apprenticeship. Due to its sudden success, which also implied relatively limited intra-party competition for access to a legislative seat, the *Lega Nord* was the party in which the time between the initial recruitment into a political office and the election to the legislature was the shortest: 7.5 years, against 20.5 years for DC parliamentarians, 20.2 for those in the PDS and the MSI, 19 for those in the PSI, 15 for those in the PRI, 12.5 for the others. In the *Lega Nord* the time it took for aspiring candidates to become MPs seemed also to be very regular, as indicated by the strong correlation ($r=.76$) between the age of first political office and the age of election to the legislature¹⁸.

¹⁶ MSI parliamentarians had also entered politics at the age of 24.

¹⁷ The higher age of entry into active politics of the parliamentarians of the League, who formed the majority of the newly elected MPs in 1992, accounts also for the significantly higher age of entry into politics of the then parliamentary "debutants" (27 years old). There were strong age variations among the deputies of the *Lega Nord*, however. The youngest (born in 1966) as well as the oldest (born in 1910) elected MPs belonged to the League. (In fact, there were older senators in the 1992 Parliament, but they kept their lifelong status as former Presidents of the Republic or as appointees of the President of the Republic).

¹⁸ This correlation is based on 41 cases only (out of 83 MPs of the League), since the earlier steps in the political careers of the

The length of political careers varied more within the then major parties¹⁹. The mere size of these parties perhaps made the control of careers less tight and less centralized. Especially in the DC and PDS, entering active politics earlier did not lead to an earlier entry to parliament. This was also true of the MPs elected between 1948 and 1972 (Cotta 1979, 242). There may be a general rule - hinted at by Schlesinger (1966, 182) - that a precocious recruitment is not a prelude to a faster and more brilliant political career. Yet, in the Italian case there was a significant exception to this rule for MPs who had spent their apprenticeship in the ruling bodies of a party youth organization. Recruits from youth parties succeeded earlier, and they were also more successful in their political careers²⁰.

Leghisti were particularly difficult to discern. It may be that this lack of information meant that they did not serve in any politically significant body before parliament. A study of local candidates of the League suggests that associational activism and frustrated rank-and-file party militancy (in the PSI most frequently) were their main previous political experiences (Segatti 1992, 258-62).

¹⁹ The total correlation between age of entry into active politics and age of election into the legislature was .25 (exclusively due to the strong correlations within *Lega Nord* and MSI groups).

²⁰ Additional Italian evidence falsifies Schlesinger's rule. In the early 1990s in Italy individuals who had begun their professional life as politicians tended to remain in the same career line more than any other occupational category of the upper class (Schizzerotto 1993, 38). The career immobility of Italian politicians is without comparison: they have the lowest rate of intragenerational mobility within the Italian upper class; the Italian upper class is less mobile than the rest of the population; the Italian population changes occupation during working life less frequently than the bulk of Western people (Cobalti-Schizzerotto 1994, 225 and 236).

Let us consider these two points in succession.

Political careers were more rapid for those who entered politics through party youth organizations. The mean age of the first parliamentary election of MPs who had started their career in the youth party was 41.9, whilst for those who had entered politics from a different route it was 46.4²¹. Given that the average duration of post-war legislatures in Italy was under four years, a four and a half year difference means that MPs coming from a youth party tended to be elected at least one legislature before their colleagues of the same cohort.

Table 4: Entry points by parliamentary power of Italian MPs in 1992-94 (in row %)

	Youth party	Adult party	Local gov.	Public autor.	Lobby, Union	Assoc- iation	Other
Backbenchers	26	20	32	5	8	5	4
Frontbenchers	31	17	31	4	8	5	4
Superelite	53	19	10	4	6	3	5

N = 826

Also the relative political success of parliamentarians appears to be linked to the starting point of their careers. More than half the superelite (53%) was drawn from former leaders of party youth organizations (table 4)²².

²¹ The mean age of first election to parliament shows a constant rise from 1976 to 1992 (Censis 1994, 39). Newer MPs have probably entered the Chambers at a proportionally older age than their senior colleagues since a longer career was required for qualifying for a parliamentary seat. This is likely to be an indicator of the progressive "petrification" of the Italian political system until 1994.

²² Moreover, 54% of the MPs who had started as party youth activists subsequently became members of a national party executive.

Furthermore, youth parties seem to have given an impulse to political careers, irrespective of the age of entry into politics of future MPs. Even among the superelite members who turned to active politics after the age of 25 (17 individuals), the majority (9 individuals) began in a youth party. Thus, it was not the younger starting age, but the locus of the apprenticeship which helped future members of the superelite in their career achievements²³.

Table 5: Apprentices in a party youth organization by generation among the 1992-94 Italian MPs (in %)^a

PARTY	GENERATION OF MPs			
	War	Reconst.	Cold-war	Protest
DC	43	28	21	45
PDS	31	24	18	25
PSI	8	33	24	47
RC	10	10	26	24
MSI	50	44	42	83
PRI	29	42	38	50
PLI	0	33	13	17
Others	0	22	11	21

N = 826

^a Each cell shows the proportion of MPs who have held a youth party office in each party in each generation

Finally, which cohorts, among Italian parliamentarians elected in 1992, were more extensively recruited from party youth organizations? Could it be that youth party offices

²³ Moreover, members of the superelite who came from youth parties obtained their first parliamentary seat when they were 39, whilst their equally successful colleagues who had started their career in other political institutions had to wait until they were 45 (almost as long as backbenchers).

were the entry points of senior MPs, but are not favourable starting points for the current generations of young aspirants to a political career? To answer this question, MPs were divided into four generation sets (table 5)²⁴.

Youth organizations played an increasingly important part as political entry points of Italian MPs of the early 1990s. Ex-activists of these organizations amounted to only 12% of the MPs born before 1926, but 26% of those born in the 1926-36 period, 27% of those born in the 1937-45 period, and 35% of those born after 1945. *The younger a parliamentarian was, the higher the chances that he had belonged to a ruling body of a youth political organization.*

Party differences are substantial. Among Christian Democrats, the passage through a youth political group was especially frequent among both the oldest and the youngest generation of MPs. In the first case, this was due to the paramount role of catholic youth organizations in the political socialization of Christian Democratic elites: 71% of "war generation" parliamentarians of the DC that participated in youth politics belonged to the youth section of the *Azione Cattolica*. The share of those who emerged through catholic organizations is lower among younger DC MPs (36% in the "reconstruction generation", 22% in the "Cold-War generation", and 11% in the "protest generation"). While

²⁴ Those who were born before 1926 were young and active during World War II: they belong to the "war generation"; those born between 1926 and 1936 were young soon after World War II: they are part of the "reconstruction generation"; those born between 1937 and 1945 had their first political experiences in the Cold War climate: they are called the "Cold-War generation"; those born after 1945 were young at the time of the youth protest: they are therefore labelled the "protest generation".

catholic bodies lost importance as training grounds for future Christian Democratic elites, the DC Youth Movement gained momentum, testifying to the fact that in its recruitment policy the DC was increasingly freeing itself from church influences. The "secularization" of youth recruitment paralleled the growing autonomy of the party from the early organizational and ideological links with the local parish²⁵.

Among the parliamentarians of the PDS, one out of four MPs had an office in the FGCI (the youth section of the Communist Party)²⁶. The largest proportion of former Young Communists is found in the oldest generation - those who reconstituted the FGCI immediately after the war. From approximately 1975, the FGCI provided fewer MPs, since the PCI began to look for people who had been politically active on the Left outside party structures - at least in the earlier stages of their political involvement (Sebastiani 1983, 121-2; Lange et al. 1991). However, the FGCI leadership remained a pathway for political careers at the highest level in the PCI. According to a Leninist conception of party personnel, future leaders of the PCI were carefully groomed and then moved up to the apex of the internal hierarchy. Leadership in the youth party was held as a

²⁵ The fact that 22% of the former young activists in catholic groups in the 11th legislature were not elected under the DC flag attests to the same process.

²⁶ This figure also includes the MPs of *Rifondazione Comunista*, in large part elder and obscure grassroots militants put forward as "true communists" by that party at its first electoral contest.

training ground for subsequent adult party leadership²⁷. It was actually reserved for rising stars such as the general secretaries-to-be Enrico Berlinguer, Achille Occhetto, and Massimo D'Alema²⁸.

In conclusion, it is often argued that in the first fifty years of the Republican era the Italian political class was drawn from party structures; it would be more correct to say that, to a large extent, the real breeding grounds were party youth organizations. The bulk of parliamentary personnel had already made its way to the top of these youth organizations, whose ruling bodies have been an important reservoir of political recruitment in Italy - at least in the "First" Republic.

²⁷ In the PSI too, «according to Nenni, the youth party secretary was expected to become the "adult" party secretary general. Before Craxi, we all thought that this form of political succession would have taken place in the PSI; both Signorile and Manca had this expectation» (I.6, PSI leader).

²⁸ One of the adult leaders interviewed recognized this almost paradigmatic role of the youth organization in the Communist Party: «the FGCI used to be the fundamental channel of selection of new leaders, especially those with an intellectual background and style» (I.4, PDS leader). In contrast, mid-level FGCI elites were not given many chances beyond local politics. Another political leader (who subsequently left the PCI) describes the rigid structuring of careers in the Communist Party for lower level youth party leaders (as was he): «After holding an FGCI office, I became assistant-mayor and mayor in my hometown. Had I remained in the PCI, my career would have come to an end there. My ascent to national leadership prominence happened completely outside the PCI» (I.2, AD leader).

4. *Where Have They Gone? The Occupational Destiny of Former Top Activists in the DC, PCI, PSI Youth Organizations*

Thirty former general secretaries of a political youth movement sat in the 11th Italian Parliament²⁹. Indeed, a leadership role at early age formed the background of the bulk of the leaders of the "First" Republic. The most famous of them, Giulio Andreotti, had his first political success when appointed general secretary of the Young Christian Democrats in 1944. Many of his successors also had outstanding careers (in particular, Emilio Colombo who was minister thirty-two times and Franco Maria Malfatti ten times). The formerly dominant leader of the PSI, Bettino Craxi, was prominent among the Young Socialists' of the end of the 1950s. All the "number twos" in the PSI of the 1980s (Valdo Spini, Claudio Signorile, Enrico Manca, Claudio Martelli, Gianni De Michelis, and Giulio Di Donato) were part of the executive committee of party youth organizations³⁰; the post-Craxi "new" Socialist Party (SI) secretary Enrico Boselli was Young Socialists' national secretary in the mid-1970s. The leaders of the PCI-PDS and the MSI emanating from the youth sections of their parties have already been mentioned.

²⁹ Six belonged to the DC and PSI, five to the PDS and the MSI, three to the PRI, two to the PLI, one to La Rete and Lista Pannella.

³⁰ Manca and Signorile were national secretaries of the Young Socialists in the 1950s-1960s; Spini was a leading figure in the late 1960s-early 1970s; Martelli was a member of the executive committee of the Young Republicans in the 1960s; De Michelis started as a right-wing militant, but then changed his mind and reached the leadership of the "lay" students' movement (UGI); Di Donato was national vice-secretary of the Young Socialists' Federation in the 1970s.

Were these individuals exceptional? Was their background in the youth parties accidental? If this is the case, we should expect their former colleagues as leading activists in the party youth organizations not to have followed a political career³¹.

Table 6: Positions held in 1990-93 by members of 1974-77 executive committees and national councils in DC, PCI, PSI youth organizations (in column %)

1990-93 OFFICE	YOUTH PARTY OFFICE	
	Nat. Council 74	Execut.Commit. 26
Parliament	4	11
Nat.Influence ^a	13	15
Loc.Gov.nment ^b	18	24
Loc.Authority ^c	20	14
Party Office ^d	7	10
Priv.Company	1	2
No «who's who»	37	24

N = 435

- a Positions of national influence (directors of State owned companies, chairmanship of governmental agencies, top civil service and unions offices, national TV or newspaper editors)
- b Regional, provincial, or capital city councillors or executive members (including mayors)
- c Directors of local authorities, banks, unions; local radio-TV and newspaper editors
- d Full-time party office at national or provincial-regional level

In fact, the bulk of the youth party leaders of the mid-1970s became full-time politicians (table 6). Between 1990 and 1993, more than half of the 1974-77 ruling elite of

³¹ Analyses contained in this section are based on a dataset of former youth party activists described in note 7.

the MGDC, FGCI, and FGS held a powerful position either as parliamentarians (10.5%), regional councillors (5.3%), councillors in provincial or capital cities (19.3%), members of party executive committees (9.6%), directors of public companies and organizations (9.6%, mostly in the financial and banking sector), leaders of associations at a national level (1.7%), or top civil servants (3.5%). Others were directors of regional or smaller scale public non-elective authorities (8.8% in transport, gas, rural banks, hospitals, and public agencies alike) or leaders of local interest groups (5.3%). *In their early forties, three out of four of the former top activists in the party youth organizations earned their living in politics*³².

As in the adult parties, members of the *comitato centrale* or *direzione nazionale* (the "executive" of the party) and members of the larger *consiglio nazionale* (the "parliament" of the party) constitute two different strata of political actors, distinct not only in terms of real decision-making powers, but also in terms of career prospects. Former members of the *direzione* or *comitato centrale* have almost three times more of a chance of entering parliament in their forties than their colleagues of the *consiglio nazionale*. They are also more likely to be registered as holders of one or more «who's who» positions. They more often wield power in political institutions at the

³² Among the best known figures, one should mention a confederate union secretary, two party secretaries, three junior ministers, an employers' union secretary, a mass Catholic organization leader, a party paper editor, the editor of the most popular TV news.

national level, whereas former national councillors in the youth party are more likely to have become incumbents of locally based political bodies. Since the national councils in the MGDC, FGCI, and FGS were composed of the local leaders of the movements, this career development seems to reproduce, at an adult level, the pattern of influence which they had as young politicians.

Table 7: Offices held in 1993 by men and women delegates to MGDC, FGCI, FGS national councils and executive committees between 1974 and 1977 (in column %)

1993 OFFICE	GENDER	
	Male 91	Female 9
Parliament	6	5
Nat.Influence	14	10
Loc.Gov.nment	20	10
Loc.Authority	19	8
Party Office	7	7
Priv.Company	2	0
No «who's who»	32	60

N = 435

Gender too is influential (table 7). Not only were women a tiny minority (9%) of the youth party officers in the 1970s³³, and discriminated against in relation to access to the ruling boards of the movements (less than 8%): they

³³ Youth parties used to be all-male structures. In the 1990s dataset women constituted 3.8% of the Young Socialists, 6.5% of the Young Christian Democrats, and 20% of the Young Communists. In their youth organizations as in Parliament (Guadagnini 1987 and 1993; Cattaneo-D'Amato 1990, 47-60) and local governments (Bettin-Magnier 1989, 65 ff.), the PCI and subsequently the PDS always gave more room to women representatives than any other party (particularly from the early 1970s onwards).

were also less able (or interested) to build their future career on that political experience. While only 32% of the young males who were members of youth parties' executive committees in the mid-1970s did not appear in the 1991 and 1994 «who's who», this was the case for 60% of their female colleagues.

Table 8: Position held in 1993 by members of Executive Committees (EC) and National Councils (NC) in the youth organizations of the DC, PCI, and PSI between 1974 and 1977 (in column %)

1993 POSITION	DC Youth		PSI Youth		PCI Youth	
	EC	NC	EC	NC	EC	NC
Parliament	29	6	9	3	7	2
Nat. Influence	22	13	21	17	9	6
Loc. Gov.ment	21	21	28	12	23	19
Loc. Influence	0	21	21	19	12	17
Party Office	14	7	7	8	11	4
Priv. Company	7	0	0	3	2	0
No «who's who»	7	32	14	38	36	52

N = 435

Political achievements of activists at the two levels of authority in the youth organizations (national council and executive committee) are different across parties (table 8). The DC and PSI were not only the two major governmental parties in the political history of Italy after World War II, but also the parties in which the importance of the youth sections as agencies for recruitment of the adult

political class was the greatest³⁴. Young Christian Democrats and Socialists at the top of their organizations in the 1970s had more of a chance of success as a result of that preliminary political experience. Former young Christian Democrats were especially less likely to have abandoned political activity than their PCI and PSI counterparts, and were particularly likely to be elected to representative institutions and to party offices. Fifteen years later, only 7% of the former top officers and 32% of the former national councillors of the MGDC were not in the Italian «who's who». Thus, almost one in three of the most influential and one in fifteen of the lower level officers in the DC youth organization had a seat in parliament. The others were regional councillors, mayors, presidents or members of boards of national banks and other national enterprises, central offices of farmers' unions, and so on.

These career achievements are a little less common among the former top activists of the Youth Socialist Federation. The relatively lesser success of former Young Socialists seems to be due to the changes of political line in the party under Craxi's leadership from 1976 to 1993. As the youth section was orientated toward the left³⁵, not only

³⁴ However, the largest party youth organization was the FGCI, which counted almost 500,000 members in 1950 and still some 50,000 in 1989 (Bardi-Morlino 1992, 481). Before being dissolved together with the Communist Party in 1991, the cost of the organization had reached about 200 millions lire per month. Party informants claim that when the ex-PCI youth section was rebuilt afterwards (with the name of *Sinistra Giovanile nel PDS*), this was on a far cheaper basis.

³⁵ Not only in Italy, left-wing parties have youth sections which tend to be always more leftist than "adult" members. To close them down as a result, for a period or more, is quite a normal solution to possible

did Craxi disband it for almost a decade, but he also marginalized many of its former leaders who since then remained in "political exile" in their local strongholds³⁶.

Compared to their DC and PSI counterparts, fewer former national activists of the Communist Youth Federation gained a prominent political office as adults in the 1990s. Some seem to be lost in the machine as party functionaries; others abandoned the party, possibly as a consequence of the PCI split of 1989 (for instance, a former FGCI national secretary was elected to parliament on the *Rifondazione Comunista* list). The main cause of the exclusion of more than one third of the former top activists of the FGCI is likely to be due to the fact that the PCI had less control of political appointments (*lottizzazione*), except in some regions (Tuscany, Umbria, and Emilia-Romagna). In general, the DC and PSI could offer better career prospects than the PCI³⁷.

embarrassments deriving from their ideological deviations (for British examples, see Abrams-Little 1965, 320).

³⁶ One of the senior leaders interviewed admitted that such a «local isolation perhaps has saved me, keeping me far from a certain system that has broken down in the 1990s» (I.6, PSI leader).

³⁷ Since the province of residence of young activists in this dataset is unknown, it is not possible to test the hypothesis of unequal geographical distribution of political career achievements in Italy.

5. Conclusion

The ruling bodies of the party youth organizations were the most common entry points of parliamentary careers in Italy in the early 1990s. This was even more the case for three categories of MPs: those who represented the major parties, those who were incumbents of higher political offices, and those who entered politics at a younger age. Besides parliament, former top activists of party youth organizations could usually reach a number of other political posts when older. Thus, the «structure of political opportunities» of the "First" Republic gave many chances of access to the political class to the limited circles of young people groomed by "specialized" party institutions.

Perhaps a party youth organization performed a comparable function only in the USSR, where Komsomol stood out as the main selectorate of political elites (Harasymiw 1984; Klugman 1989)³⁸. Would-be apparatchiks affiliated to it when still very young. And when guessing who would have

³⁸ Additional comparative data are few and old. Two clearly contrasting cases are West Germany and Britain. «Activity in party youth organizations is not [a] prerequisite for a political career» in Germany, where «a public representative normally enters politics via community politics» (Herzog 1978, 257; also Herzog 1975, 75-9). But German party youth organizations are different at least as regards an important aspect - the age limit for membership, which was 35-40 in Germany, was rarely over 30 in Italy. In Britain, the Young Liberals could claim «to have launched many important political careers - those, for example, of Sir Winston Churchill and Mr. Harold Wilson - [and that] most of the present [in the mid-1960s] party leaders are graduates of the student organization themselves» (Abrams-Little 1965, 326-7).

become «the new Soviet man», they could not help thinking: «The new Soviet boy!» (Klugman 1989, 22)³⁹.

It is plausible that by the early 1990s the young who were politically ambitious in Italy were concentrated among the counterparts of "Soviet boys". Generally speaking, young aspiring politicians are likely to seek to enter politics at the entry point which was most favourable in the recent past. Once this sort of main door to political careers has been identified, we may expect that those who pass through it form a population of individuals that are most determined to pursue a political career⁴⁰. Consequently, in the following chapters the incumbents of ruling offices in the Italian party youth organizations will be regarded as young adults who, with good reason, aim at becoming professional politicians.

³⁹ The almost simultaneous weakening and fall of the Italian and Soviet political class in the late 1980s-early 1990s has perhaps a common cause: the low «permeability», as Putnam (1976, 47-8) calls it, of the political recruitment system. In general terms, these two cases confirm that «the more confined the recruits are to a particular stratum of society, the narrower the channels of entry, and the more esoteric the institutional socialization patterns, the greater is the danger of elite isolation» (Tapper 1976, 79), and, hence, of its breakdown. Such an argument is applied to the Italian case by Cotta and Verzichelli (1994).

⁴⁰ This does not lead to a complete census of the young people who intend and attempt to become political professionals, but there is probably no way to draw such a census.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARING YOUNG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS AND NONACTIVISTS:

DATA AND METHODS

1. Young Political Activists: A Selected Minority

Young political activists are rare in every generation. Even in 1968 (perhaps the time of highest youth political mobilization in the twentieth century)¹, the large majority of people in their twenties remained aloof from politics (Lipset 1972, 75 and *sparsim*; Altbach 1989, 7-8). It has been estimated that no more than 10% of young people was involved in political activities in any country (Rezsohazy 1994, 252).

A large body of comparative evidence demonstrates that usually mature individuals tend to devote more time and attention to political affairs than young adults (Lane 1959, 217-8; Milbrath-Goel 1977, 114-5; Verba-Nie 1972, 138 ff.; Dawson et al. 1977, 84-5; Milbrath 1981, 227-8; Marsh-Kaase 1979, 102; Percheron-Chiche 1991, 154-7; Parry et al. 1992, 155-61; Kriesi 1993, 88-9). Although youths may develop an interest for the greatest ethical-political issues as a consequence of the late adolescence «identity crisis»

¹ In search of precedents, American observers had to recall the radical students of the 1930s (Lipset 1966, 351-4); in Europe, the only comparable (in scale and scope) mobilizations of young people dated back to some of the nationalist upheavals of the first half of the nineteenth century (Altbach 1969; Braungart 1984).

(Jennings-Niemi 1974; Adelson 1975), political activism is not among the most common «adolescent role exits» (Hagan-Wheaton 1993)².

Indeed, the political involvement of young people in contemporary Western societies appears to be extremely low³. In the twelve countries of the then European Community, no more than 5% of the 15-24 year old respondents to an official mass survey claimed to belong to a «political party or group» (EC Commission 1989, 44). While 16% of the young Europeans expressed «much» or «some» «interest in politics», the proportion of Italians (12%) was the lowest (*ibid.*, 27). Among young Italians, moreover, lack of interest in politics and despising politicians seem to go together: in 1992 only 12.2% of 15-29 years olds expressed «some or much trust in

² Why does active politics not attract young people? It may be that, today as in the past, young people «have too many competing interests and preoccupations to find the costs of involvement worthwhile» (Sigel-Hoskin 1981, 52). In a cost-benefit perspective, they cannot afford to participate in political groups and other voluntary associations (Curtis et al. 1992, 147; Janoski-Wilson 1995, 281). Perhaps this is even more the case with the increasing postponement of the mean age of first full employment and the transformation of youth into a «moratorium stage» in the life course (Galland 1990). As a consequence, «[Les] traits attribués à la réalité des intérêts - fluctuants, diffus, dilués - des jeunes conduisent sans doute plusieurs d'entre eux à ne pas se voir porteurs d'intérêts réels. Comme leur perception de la politique tend à ramener cette dernière à une activité de défense et de promotion des intérêts, il demeure possible que se trouve ainsi expliqué le fait qu'ils se tiennent plutôt en retrait de la politique» (Hudon-Hébert 1994, 370).

³ An extraordinary degree of political mobilization among young people was spurred instead by the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. In particular, figures for the DDR show that about 80% of young people belonged to the youth organization of the Communist Party (FDJ) in the 1980s (Voigt 1988, 60). However, the dramatic fall in the level of political participation of East German youngsters after reunification - only 2.6% of 16-29 year olds were affiliated to a party in 1992 (Schneider 1995, 285) - demonstrates that, without public constraints, low political involvement during youth is prevalent everywhere.

politicians». This was the lowest figure in the 1983-1992 youth surveys (De Lillo 1993; Cavalli-De Lillo 1993, 288-9).

Concomitantly, the number of young political activists in Italy has sharply declined. While in 1970 7.3% of a large sample of 18-25 year old respondents claimed to be involved in party activities (Scarpati 1973, 249; also Tullio Altan-Marradi 1976, 472 and 488), only 6.2% in 1983, 4.1% in 1987, and 2.7% in 1992 among the young respondents to the Iard Institute's regular surveys have taken part «at least twice in the last three months» in the activities of «political organizations» (Cavalli-De Lillo 1993, 286; cf. also Caciagli 1987). Yet, albeit young people have proved increasingly «resistant to regimentation in the organizational structures of the traditional parties» (Bardi-Morlino 1994, 269), some of them continue to be attracted by active politics within parties. This selected minority constitutes the focus of the investigation that follows.

2. Activists and Nonactivists: Sampling and Controlling

In Italy as in other countries «many parties have youth organizations, aiming to attract new blood into the party» (Norris-Lovenduski 1995, 188). Although with much more limited powers, these organizations tend to mirror the party to which they are linked in almost every aspect of their

internal life⁴. As their senior counterparts, in particular, youth party local and national leaders are elected by the members or the delegates of the organization to which they belong. Yet competition for youth party offices is markedly lower than in the "adult" structure, making the recruitment of incumbents essentially a matter of supply.

The costs of taking such offices are indeed high. On the one hand, material and symbolic rewards are modest: some taste of leadership, the right to participate in the meetings of certain "adult" party committees, and small fringe benefits (at best a desk and a telephone in the party headquarters). On the other hand, these offices require a heavy personal involvement and dedication and exclude their holders from other occupations at a crucial moment in life - when people of the same age choose their career⁵. Youth party activists specialize instead in rallying, writing, criticizing, speaking in public and networking within the political world. Their activity tends to coincide with that of full-time politicians⁶.

⁴ Literature on the youth organizations of the Italian parties is almost non-existent in quantity and poor in quality except for some historical research. A bibliographical review can be found in Dal Toso (1995, 355-8).

⁵ A former national secretary of the Young Socialists recalls: «It was hard, extremely hard to lead the organization. One had to move to Rome, change one's life... Economically, we received almost nothing. Everything was public, it was a 24-hour day job. And we were about 25-26 years old. Not everyone could afford it. Some came to see this life as a deadlock and left» (I.9, PSI leader).

⁶ We assume that an individual holds a full-time political office when politics is «the sphere of activity to which the individual devotes a large part of his work time and effort - irrespective of source of

Although referring to a variety of sources⁷, in the main the following inquiry contrasts a sample of 115 activists of four Italian party youth organizations with the generation to which they belong⁸. Where possible, this comparison is based on national census data about the population of the same cohort. In the majority of cases, however, the relevant items for this research design were not included either in the census statistics or in other surveys. Therefore, a revised version of the questionnaire submitted to the political activists was applied to a control group of 322 individuals aged 18-30 living in 65 different neighbourhoods of the provinces of Florence and Pistoia⁹.

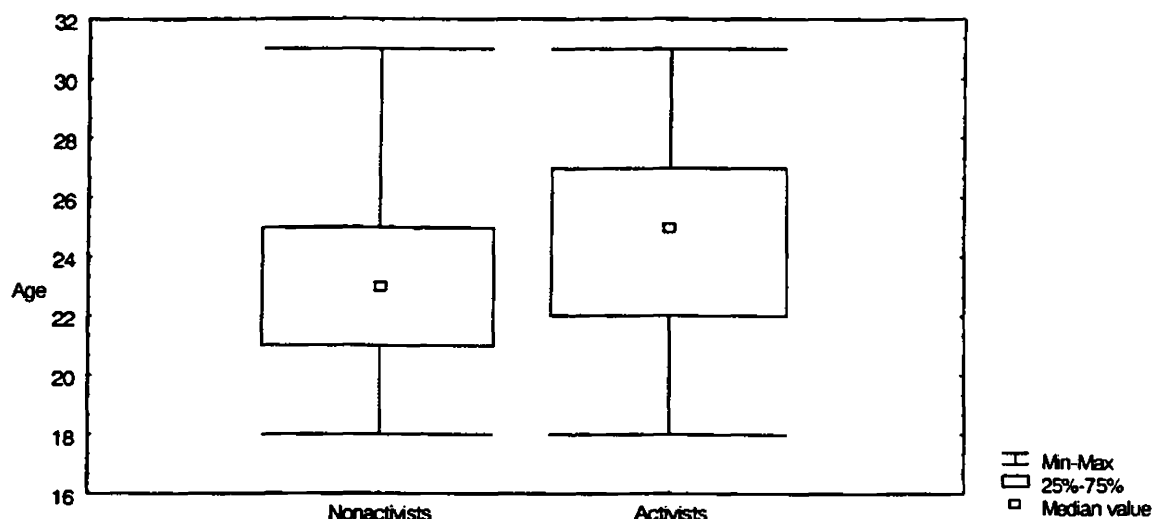
income» (Czudnowski 1975, 168). All the young party activists that will be examined in this investigation conform to this standard.

⁷ In addition to the activists-nonactivists dataset, reference is particularly made to ten open-ended interviews conducted in 1993 and 1994 with former youth party leaders who have become top-ranking political leaders: three ministers (one in the DC, one in the PSI, one in the PRI), three party general secretaries (in the PR, AD, and the SI), two party vice-secretaries (one in the PDS, one in the PPI), two parliamentarians (one in the PPI, one in the PDS). These interviews had three main aims: to find out about the dynamics of recruitment in youth parties in the previous twenty years in greater detail; to see how adult leaders consider their party youth organizations; to obtain a more global picture of recruitment policies in the Italian parties. Nine of these interviews were tape-recorded.

⁸ Activists were interviewed in 1993, either personally by the author, or by post in the case of twenty-three individuals who could not be contacted directly. About the difficulties in contacting and interviewing party elites in Italy, see Pridham (1987, 78-80).

⁹ Questionnaires were administered personally to this control group by a team of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Political Science of Florence in the spring of 1993. Each respondent was located drawing by lot a number of streets, street numbers, and flat levels which were then randomly combined. A reserve list was also formed. Three incomplete interviews were discarded from the final dataset.

Figure 1: Age structure of political activists and nonactivists



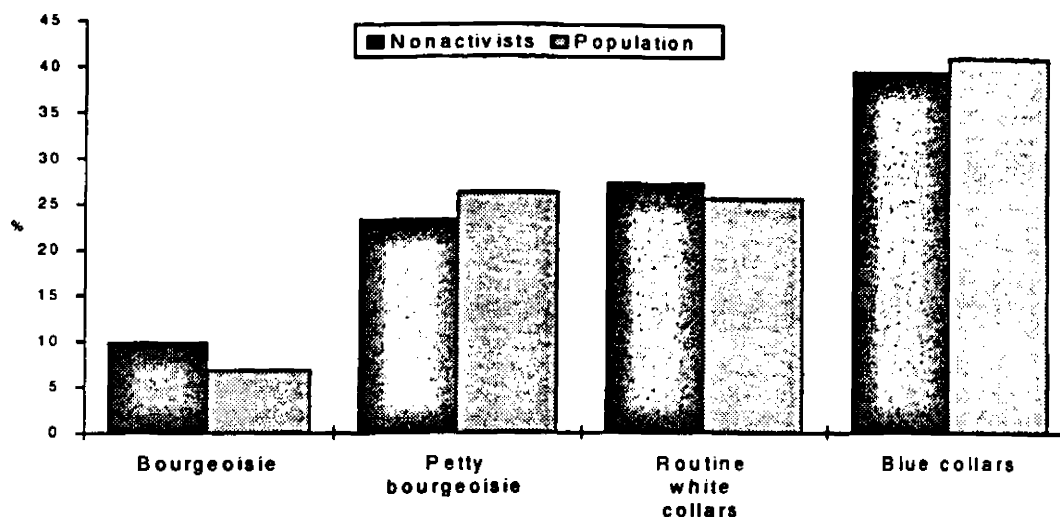
As was to be expected¹⁰, no individual in the control group held any office in party organizations. We will, therefore, call this the sample of "nonactivists". Its age structure is similar to that of the sample of activists, even though younger people are slightly more numerous (figure 1). On the other hand, the control group is very close to the population in terms of class structure of the family of origin (figure 2)¹¹. Women are instead over-

¹⁰ The total number of youth party officers in Italy can be estimated to range between 2,500 and 3,000: that is, about one out of three thousands people of the same cohort.

¹¹ In terms of individual occupation, the sample can be considered representative of the basic division between young people who work and those who do not, as workers are approximately in the same proportion as in the reference population (39.5% vs. 47.1%). In greater detail, however, job-seekers and unemployed persons are under-represented (5.3% vs. 23.1%), while individuals that are not in the labour force (mostly students) are over-represented (55.2% vs. 29.7%) (Istat 1995a, 171, 173, 198 and 203).

represented (56%).

Figure 2: Class composition of the nonactivists' sample and the population^a



^a Data about the population are drawn from Cobalti-Schizzerotto's sample (1994, 72). The four classes are a collapsed version of Erikson-Goldthorpe' schema: "Bourgeoisie"= classes I-II; "Routine white collars"= class III; "Petty bourgeoisie"= class IV; "Blue collars"= classes V-VI-VII. Family class of respondents has been assessed on the basis of the highest rank occupation of parents

Most of the analysis will be carried out on the sample resulting from the combination of the two independent random samples - those of activists and nonactivists - according to a «case-control» design (also known as «response-based» or «choice-based» sampling)¹². This type of design is popular

¹² As anticipated (chapter II, note 62), multivariate data analysis will consist of logistic regressions applying the random sampling maximum likelihood estimator. Logistic regression makes it possible to measure the effect of two or more independent variables over the probability of a given event (here, having taken a party office). The use of this technique with response-based samples also is statistically legitimate when the response function takes a logit form and samples are small (as

in medical research, and especially in epidemiology, since it appears particularly suitable for the study of the determinants of rare traits - such as certain diseases (Clayton-Hills 1993, 153-65; Wacholder 1995). In fact, more common survey procedures (i.e., simple random sampling) would not produce enough variation in the dependent variable of interest¹³.

Although seldom used, case-control sampling processes are also «potentially very useful in sociological research» (Xie-Manski 1989, 283). Even a most conservative appraisal recognizes that they «help us to gain some valuable information about the empirical plausibility of a causal inference» (King et al. 1994, 141). At the very least, a case-control study serves to «generate a more precise hypothesis than we began with» (*ibid.*, 142)¹⁴. Indeed the chief aim of this investigation is to generate such a hypothesis, which may be tested with other research designs and samples in the future¹⁵.

in this case); only the parameters of the intercept cannot be interpreted properly (cf. Prentice-Pyke 1979; Xie-Manski 1989).

¹³ Yet, surveys that need to include rare elements in the population employ «disproportionate stratified sampling» - that is, a sampling scheme which is conceptually equivalent to the «case-control» except that the variables on which the stratification is made are independent rather than dependent (cf. Kish 1965, 406; Blalock 1967, 301-2; Fabbri 1989, 103 and 109-10).

¹⁴ Note, however, that King et al. (1994) have in mind the application of this research strategy to «qualitative» (i.e., with few cases) studies.

¹⁵ This relative understatement of the research aim takes into account a methodological limit of this study: namely, the difference in the geographical base of case and control sampling (national for activists, local for nonactivists). On the other hand, consider the following:

3. The Activists' Sample

The youth organizations from which the sample of activists was drawn were affiliated with the four main Italian parties at the 1992 national elections: the DC-PPI, the PDS, the PSI, and the Northern League. These organizations are: the *Giovani Popolari* (former MGDC, youth organization of the DC and then of the PPI), the *Sinistra Giovanile nel PDS* (former FGCI, youth organization of the PDS), the *Federazione Giovanile Socialista* (youth organization of the PSI), and the *Movimento Giovanile della Lega Nord* (youth organization of the Lega Nord)¹⁶.

a) The sample of nonactivists is satisfactorily representative of the youth population in terms of family class, occupational situation, and political participation;

b) In terms of value orientations, existing research on Italian youth signals «un processo di modernizzazione culturale che ha coinvolto i giovani di tutto il paese [sic] che quindi non si può più parlare sul piano degli orientamenti culturali dei giovani di modelli culturali diversi circoscrivibili in termini geografici» (Cavalli 1990, 355; cf. also Burgalassi 1991, 32). While sub-cultural differences seem to diminish, so that they are almost entirely ignored in the most recent report on Italian youth (Cavalli-De Lillo 1993a), youngsters of Central Italy, from whom the sample of nonactivists is drawn, are shown to occupy a median position between Northern and Southern peers in structural terms (e.g., economic opportunities, aspirations, and consumption patterns: Chiesi-Martinelli 1993, 53 ff.; Cavalli-De Lillo 1993b, 158 ff.).

c) On some explanatory variables, as will be seen, differences between activists and nonactivists are not only high, but also in line with what was expected.

¹⁶ The bulk of the *Giovani Popolari* were interviewed at their re-founding congress in Rome (July 1993), when formally they were still representatives of the then-called *Movimento Giovanile Democrazia Cristiana*. Among young *Lega Nord* leaders, four parliamentarians of that party were included; even though not formally members of the youth organization, they are to be considered as belonging in effect to the leadership core of the young *Leghisti*, since the *Movimento Giovanile* of the League has no national ruling body, in line with the regionalist ideology of the party. The Young Socialists were interviewed on the eve of their dissolution; their number is smaller than foreseen, but it reflects the then comparatively reduced size of that youth organization. Lastly, among the Young Socialists were included the national leader and

Table 1: The sample of activists by party and power

POWER	PARTY				Totals
	DC	PDS	PSI-AD	LEGA	
NATIONAL LEADER Row %	12 32.5%	18 48.6%	1 2.7%	6 16.2%	37
LOCAL LEADER Row %	20 45.4%	13 29.6%	2 4.5%	9 20.5%	44
LOCAL SUB-LEADER Row %	22 64.7%	4 11.8%	7 20.6%	1 2.9%	34
All Grps	54	35	10	16	115

The universe of the activists in each party organization can be divided into three strata (table 1):

1) Members of the national ruling committees (*direzione nazionale, esecutivo nazionale*): 15-20 individuals in each party youth organization;

2) Members of the national councils (*consiglio nazionale*), substantially coinciding with local leaders (*segretario provinciale, segretario regionale*): about 100 individuals in the *Giovani Popolari* and the *Sinistra Giovanile*, 50 in the *Lega Nord* and the *Federazione Giovanile Socialista*;

3) Members of the local executive committees (*direzione provinciale, direzione regionale*): 400-500 individuals in the party youth organizations of the DC and PDS, and about 100 in the *Lega Nord* and in the *Federazione Giovanile Socialista*.

Given the size of the corresponding universe of youth party members, only the local sub-leaders have to be regarded as a relatively limited sample (about 1/30th of the

three provincial leaders of the *Giovani in Alleanza Democratica* (the youth organization of a small liberal-socialist party which was formed in 1993 and took part in the 1994 general elections).

reference population). The local leaders form a larger sample: about 1/7th of the universe. Among top leaders, «dense sampling» was obtained (Coleman 1958; Black-Champion 1976, 309): on average, half the members of the national ruling bodies were interviewed in each party.

These young men and women are in their mid-twenties. Formal limits of age for membership in the Italian party youth organizations quite often vary, but never go beyond 30¹⁷. Sometimes these limits are increased to allow a ruling group to remain in power, to avoid sudden leadership gaps, or to prepare a succession. Usually, however, leaders are replaced when they exceed the age limit.

ny: i

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the age of activists by party and level of power

PARTY	NATIONAL LEADER	LOCAL LEADER	LOCAL SUBLEADER
DC	26.2 (1.8)	26.1 (1.7)	24.9 (3.3)
PDS	23.6 (3.2)	23.1 (2.8)	19.8 (3.1)
PSI-AD	26.0 (0.0)	23.7 (2.1)	27.2 (2.1)
LEAGUE	25.0 (4.0)	24.1 (5.2)	20.0 (0.0)
All Groups	24.8 (3.1)	24.7 (3.2)	24.7 (3.6)

¹⁷ Exceptions are reported in the youth organizations (Giovine Italia and FUAN) linked to the right-wing party (MSI): their leaders in the 1960s and 1970s remained in power even when older than 40. Also by virtue of the explicitly non-democratic ideology of the party, in those cases appointment and confirmation from above were the recognized rule.

Offices within the youth parties tend not to be given on the basis of seniority - neither of age (as table 2 shows) nor of active militancy. On average, national leaders have been fully involved in politics for the previous three years; local leaders and sub-leaders for the previous two.

The different mean age of the activists in the youth section of the PDS and the PSI-AD requires some explanation. Activists of the PDS-linked organization took up their positions earlier than their peers in other parties, since the organization to which they belong was re-founded in 1991 following the abandonment of communism. Instead, the seeming anomaly of the center-left activists (PSI-AD), among whom local sub-leaders are older than leaders, results from the heterogeneity of the party affiliation of the respondents - the older ones come from the traditional PSI youth organization, the younger ones from the more recent AD youth organization.

Members of this sample are drawn from all over Italy: 42.6% from the North, 25.2% from the Centre, 32.2% from the South. Such a territorial distribution does not change from one party to another - with the exception of the *Lega Nord*¹⁸. It probably mirrors the real diffusion of party youth organizations in the country.

¹⁸ The *Movimento Giovanile della Lega Nord* is formally present only in Lombardia, Piemonte, Val d'Aosta, Trentino, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, and Toscana. Yet, 68.3% of its 7,772 members in 1993 belonged to the Lombard Federation. This geographical concentration of the Young *Leghisti* was even higher than in the "adult" party, where Lombards made up 59.1% of total party membership.

Table 3: Place of residence of the young activists by their level of power

POWER	PLACE OF RESIDENCE			Totals
	CITY ^a	TOWN ^b	VILLAGE ^c	
NAT.LEADER Row %	22 59.5%	9 24.3%	6 16.2%	37
LOC.LEADER Row %	22 50.0%	11 25.0%	11 25.0%	44
SUBLEADER Row %	16 47.0%	9 26.5%	9 26.5%	34
All Grps	60	29	26	115

a Capital of province

b More than 30,000 inhabitants, not capital of province

c Less than 30,000 inhabitants

Finally, activists are not equally distributed in terms of the size of the town in which they live. City dwellers are in a majority: they form 30.2% of the Italian population (Istat 1994, 28), but 52% of young party activists. The number of individuals who live in an urban context even increases as we move up through the hierarchy of the party youth organizations (table 3).

4. Summary

This chapter has presented the data on which the empirical work which follows is based. After having identified top activists in the party youth organizations as the "prototypical political ambitious" among the Italian

youth (cf. chapter III)¹⁹, a sample of these activists has been drawn and interviewed. This sample shall be contrasted with a random sample of nonactivists of the same cohort. The characteristics of both samples and their integration according to a case-control design have been described in the previous sections. The next chapters will examine individually the three types of factors - personality, social origins, and personal networks - pinpointed by the existing hypotheses (cf. chapter II) about the roots of political ambition.

¹⁹ That youth party officers have political ambitions is also shown by the fact that about one third of them have already been elected to municipal and provincial councils.

CHAPTER V

THE PERSONALITY TRAITS OF YOUNG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

1. A Predisposition for Politics?

Almost without exception, studies comparing political elites and the mass public show that there are strong differences on many planes, including the *personality traits* and *value orientations* of the two groups¹. In the context of democratic and representative regimes, this finding raises a major question concerning political recruitment: Do preexisting psycho-cultural differences distinguish future politicians from their peers?

A positive answer is given by the psychological accounts of political ambition reviewed in chapter II (§ 3.1)². They assume that some individuals are exposed to pathological and specific pre-adult socialization processes

¹ After the pioneer studies (Stouffer 1955; Converse 1964; Luttberg 1968; Jackman 1972), the issue has been reformulated from both a methodological and a substantive viewpoint (Barton-Parsons 1977; Sullivan et al. 1978; Nunn et al. 1978; Converse-Markus 1979; McClosky-Brill 1983; Fletcher 1988; Barnum-Sullivan 1989). In recent years, it has attracted revived attention (Sniderman et al. 1991; Lerner et al. 1991; Shamir 1991; Gibson-Duch 1991; Duch-Gibson 1992; Sullivan et al. 1993; and between party elites and members, Norris 1995b).

² Critics of this view are numerous (Prewitt et al. 1966; Marsh 1971; Searing et al. 1973; Searing et al. 1976; Dowse-Hughes 1977; Searing 1986; Renshon 1989). They hold that psycho-cultural traits are not a crucial factor in political recruitment processes, and that, in any case, they are likely to change as actors pass from one political role to another. In more general terms, research on the personality of different occupational strata shows strong evidence «in opposition to those who see the relationship between occupational conditions and personality as resulting solely from selective recruitment and job-molding» (Kohn-Scholler 1983, 122; cf. also Spenner-Otto 1985).

that generate orientations which are particularly suited to political roles. These individuals will thereafter seek to take a political career. The stress on psycho-cultural traits gives substance to a «selective recruitment hypothesis»: political activists and leaders emerge because of their somewhat special personality which has been acquired early in life³.

To test this hypothesis, young politicians, who should have experienced the supposedly crucial socialization processes a short time ago, form a more adequate population than the adult political elites who are usually the object of research. The test will consist of a comparison of the self-perceptions and orientations of young political activists and nonactivists. The more this set of psycho-cultural traits is found to differ between the two groups, the more supported is the «selective recruitment hypothesis». Similarity between activists and nonactivists, on the other hand, would cast serious doubts on the hypothesis.

A number of personality factors have been suggested as antecedents or correlates of political ambition in the literature (cf. chapter II, § 3.1 and § 3.3). They are the following:

³ Incidentally, such a position has important normative consequences. For instance, it leads to attributing the fact that elites are more tolerant than the mass public to the capacity of the system of political recruitment to select "enlightened" persons. Therefore, «selective recruitment is especially congruent with democratic elitism and conservative variants of democratic theory» (Sullivan et al. 1993, 54).

- (a) Adolescent isolation;
- (b) Adolescent value crisis;
- (c) Adolescent insecurity;
- (d) Authoritarianism;
- (e) Dogmatism;
- (f) Cognitive complexity;
- (g) Attitudinal consistency.

Indicators of each of these factors have been gathered in the interviews with activists and nonactivists, with a view to ascertaining their relative ability to predict political involvement. In particular, the analysis will deal with the perceptions of change from adolescence (§ 2) and the contents and structure of value orientations (§ 3). The influence of personality traits on the disposition to become politically active will then be assessed on the basis of all empirical findings (§ 4)⁴.

2. Entering the Adult Age: Self-Perceptions of Change

According to psychopathological accounts of political ambition, politicians are held to take up their career because of a higher need to compensate for pre-adult deficiencies such as a sense of isolation, insecurity, and low self-esteem. If activism is a "cure" for these "illnesses", activists should then recognize⁵ more of a

⁴ Needless to say, the analysis that follows does not claim to provide a full picture of the respondents' personality.

⁵ Self-recognition is the most correct way of recording compensatory changes of ego from a psychoanalytic point of view, inasmuch as psychoanalysis holds that there is no recovery without self-awareness. Psychologists give some evidence that self-reported items of subjective

change in themselves after their entry into politics than nonactivists after their entry into a job or a university. Thus, the "sense of change" expressed by respondents may be interpreted as indicating the fulfillment of previously existing psychological needs - social adjustment, cultural adjustment, or the enhancement of the sense of personal control. Let us examine the matter in greater detail.

2.1. Social Adjustment

Biographers of Churchill describe this leader's childhood and adolescence as «almost pathetically lonely» (Rintala 1984, 381). Similarly, a significant theme in the life stories of the young radical leaders interviewed by Keniston (1968) is their isolation during adolescence. As one of them recalls, «I was fairly (pause) removed. I'd just go home after school and read. I had a few close friends, but I was never a big social-type kid...» (*ibid.*, 79). And another: «For a long time, it seemed like, in junior high school I really felt terribly alone» (*ibid.*, 81). This feeling appears to have been overcome only later on, in the last years of high school, «because there was this large group of people with the same kind of values...» (*ibid.*, 79).

A general case can be made about political activism deriving from a desire to associate with peers and to belong

states are less affected by transient mood than one may expect (Pavot-Diener 1993). Similar items are also common in large survey studies (e.g., Strumpel et al. 1976, 202; Jennings-Niemi 1981, 284-5; Veroff et al. 1982, 47).

to a homogeneous social group. Two questions in the context of this study addressed this possible basic motivation of social adjustment. One inquired about the perceived change in the number of friends after having assumed their main early-adult role; the other asked respondents to react to the sentence: «I feel part of a united group with a clear identity». In both cases, respondents indicated whether this was «more», «equally», or «less» the case than before.

Table 1: Change in the sense of sociability: «Compared to before taking up your party office [for activists] / job or university [for nonactivists], how many friends do you have?»

	MORE THAN BEFORE	SAME AS BEFORE	LESS THAN BEFORE	Totals
NONACTIVISTS Row %	167 52.5%	117 36.8%	34 10.7%	318
ACTIVISTS Row %	58 50.4%	50 43.5%	7 6.1%	115
All Grps	225	167	41	433

About half the sample of young activists stated that there had been an increase in the number of their friends after having taken their main adult role - about the same as their apoliticized counterparts (table 1)⁶.

⁶ Generally speaking, sociability in itself increases during early adulthood with respect to adolescent years. Youth appears as the most «experimental» stage in the lifecourse in the domain of social relations. Different pieces of research in the U.S. (Burt 1991) and Europe (Héran 1988; Höllinger-Haller 1990, 115-6; Forsé 1991, 257) have shown that the experience of friendship has highs and lows: both the number of friends and the frequency of contacts rise until marriage, after which they decrease sharply, to recover and augment progressively until retirement, and finally diminish again.

This sense of widening of sociability is more infrequent among activists of middle class origin: only 31% of these expressed the feeling of having increased the number of their friends as a result of their political activism. While for offsprings of families at the extremes of the social hierarchy party life can offer opportunities of interclass contacts, middle class young politicians tend to see their entry into politics as not having an influence on their social networks⁷.

Table 2: Change in the sense of group belonging: «Compared to before taking up your party office [for activists] / job or university [for nonactivists], do you feel part of a united group with its own identity?»

	MORE THAN BEFORE	SAME AS BEFORE	LESS THAN BEFORE	Totals
NONACTIVISTS	78	136	103	317
Row %	24.6%	42.9%	32.5%	
ACTIVISTS	64	32	18	114
Row %	56.1%	28.1%	15.8%	
All Grps	142	168	121	431

⁷ In an open-ended question, only a minority of activists justified political involvement in terms of a sociability need as the following: «I wanted to participate and have an identity» (PDS local leader); «I like to be a member of the active part of society» (PPI national leader); «I felt that my ideas and wants had to be shared with others» (PDS national leader); «I just intended to socialize» (PSI local sub-leader); «I was moved by the pleasure of taking part in social life actively» (PDS local sub-leader). As may be expected, most of the answers to this direct question - «For which reasons, at a certain point in your life, did you wish to enter politics?» - were ritualistic. They can hardly be of use for analysis (cf. Norris-Lovenduski 1995, 169; contra, Lehman Schlozman et al. 1995, 9-11).

Identification with a single group is rare in modern societies, in which individuals live at the intersection of multiple affiliations. More than occupational and school groups, political parties are one of the few voluntary associations claiming to offer a strong sense of identity to their most active members. A «stronger than before» sense of group belonging is therefore to be found more often among young party activists than among nonactivists (table 2). It also follows that this feeling is more and more common at higher levels of power within the party: leadership roles imply deeper subjective involvement.

Table 3: Change in the sense of group belonging among young activists by party

	MORE THAN BEFORE	SAME AS BEFORE	LESS THAN BEFORE	Totals
DC	18	20	15	53
Row %	34.0%	37.7%	28.3%	
PDS	32	3	0	35
Row %	91.4%	8.6%	0.0%	
PSI-AD	3	5	2	10
Row %	30.0%	50.0%	20.0%	
LEAGUE	11	4	1	16
Row %	68.7%	25.0%	6.2%	
All Grps	64	32	18	114

There is also a marked difference across the parties (table 3). Even before their relatively sudden disappearance from the Italian political scene, the DC and the PSI had already loosened their unifying appeal among the normally

most idealistic cadres - the young activists. The end of these parties could thus be in part foreseen on the basis of the attitude that their younger recruits had towards them - as if they were "normal" social institutions such as firms or schools. On the other hand, a strong feeling of group affiliation was expressed by two thirds of the young militants in the PDS and the League. The persisting strength of these two parties as identity catalysts among their activists may even account, to some extent, for the greater longevity of the PDS and of the League in the turmoils of the Italian system⁸.

These large differences across the parties suggest the need for some caution in generalizing about a possible «need for group affiliation» as a precondition of youth activism. Subjective identification with a political group is not only a function of an individual need, but also of the group's "groupness". Joining (and staying within) the DC and PSI in the early 1990s could hardly be determined by a drive to become part of a united pool of people, simply because these parties no longer had a sense of group unity.

2.2. Cultural Adjustment

According to some psychological models, during adolescence prospective activists would have to face unusual

⁸ Similar party differences emerged in response to the question of whether activists «feel [more, the same as, less than before] in tune with the people around» them. The item was included to gauge the psychological gratification linked to social adjustment. Activists and nonactivists have the same scores on this item; yet, the score is higher than average for the activists in the PDS.

ideological worries, the solution of which would result in the decision to enter politics. For instance, a number of Keniston's (1968) young radicals describe adolescence as a period of unceasing intellectual unrest and struggle against a perceived state of confusion:

«I became sort of disillusioned with most of the work I was doing... And I started to read. The academic work, I didn't consider it critical. I started reading a great deal, and got involved in reading philosophy and psychology and literature [...] I would literally start at one end of the library and just work back and forth and read everything that there was» (*ibid.*, 82-3).

«For three years, like, maybe it did mess me up an awful lot. But it was a matter of how I dealt with it. And then I came out of it, you know, in the last years of high school and then went on to college» (*ibid.*, 87).

Table 4: Change in the sense of ideological coherence: «Compared to before taking up your party office [for activists] / job or university [for nonactivists], do you feel coherent with a system of ideas?»

	MORE THAN BEFORE	SAME AS BEFORE	LESS THAN BEFORE	Totals
NONACTIVISTS	172	116	30	318
Row %	54.2%	36.4%	9.4%	
ACTIVISTS	53	56	6	115
Row %	46.1%	48.7%	5.2%	
All Grps	225	172	36	433

Table 5: Change in the sense of ideological clarity: "Compared to before taking up your party office [for activists] / job or university [for nonactivists], do you feel that your positions when faced with problems are clear?"

	MORE THAN BEFORE	SAME AS BEFORE	LESS THAN BEFORE	Totals
NONACTIVISTS Row %	142 44.6%	137 43.1%	39 12.2%	318
ACTIVISTS Row %	44 38.6%	55 48.2%	15 13.2%	114
All Grps	186	192	54	432

Italian young party activists and nonactivists were asked whether they felt they changed with respect to adolescence in terms of «coherence with a system of ideas» (table 4) and «clarity when faced with problems» (table 5)⁹. Activists have developed a lesser sense of «coherence» and «clearness» than nonactivists after adolescence¹⁰. In their own opinion, having entered politics does not correspond to having interiorized a more structured ideology. The other indicator of subjective consistency - «clarity when faced with problems» - does not vary at all between activists and

⁹ A following section (§ 3.4) will analyze 'attitudinal consistency' as an objective and persisting trait, whereas this one deals with a subjective and developmental construct - i.e., whether respondents feel more consistent than they used to be.

¹⁰ Admittedly, there is some room for various interpretations of the question as regards the "before" respondents referred to. However, no psychological theory of activism states exactly how long it takes between the adolescent crisis of ideals and the actual entry into politics. Activists may have experienced such a crisis in a stronger form than nonactivists, but solved it some time before what they considered «before» in answering the question.

nonactivists. In both groups, older individuals tend to think of themselves as having a more definite approach to reality.

2.3. *Sense of Personal Control*

The relationship between self-esteem in adolescence and subsequent political activism is crucial in many supply-side accounts of political ambition, according to which the adolescent who feels particularly powerless is more attracted by political work¹¹. Another quotation from Keniston's (1968) in-depth interviews of young radical leaders summarizes the syndrome which is typically associated by psychologists with the adolescence of future activists:

«I just hated those years... I felt very awkward. It was just awful because you were in that transitional stage, you were very nervous about your relationship with the boys, you felt very awkward and very unsure of yourself. I felt all of that...» (*ibid.*, 79).

In this study, one question examines the respondents'

¹¹ Often the personal traits dealt with in this section go under the rubric of 'personal competence': «Feelings of personal competence represent an individual's evaluation of self-worth (in many or in selected areas) and his confidence in his ability to attain the goals he deems worthwhile» (Sigel-Hoskin 1981, 178). The concept is analytically composed of two dimensions: «self-esteem» and «sense of personal control». It is to this second attitude that we turn more precisely in this section. In choosing the indicators for the empirical study, personal control was held to be more encompassing than self-esteem (cf. Gurin et al. 1978). In fact, «this concept includes some elements found in the notion of self-esteem - most notably, some overlap where both touch upon the ability to achieve one's goals. But personal control allows for a combined assessment of the self and of the worldly forces which exist to facilitate or impede personal aspirations» (*ibid.*, 180; cf. also Rosenberg 1965, 5). The terms 'self-esteem', 'self-confidence', and 'self-image' will be used here only as synonyms for 'sense of personal control'.

«mastery of the future» compared to that of their adolescence¹². Respondents were asked to assess whether their own future is «more, equally, or less uncertain than before» having joined the party (for activists) or work-post-secondary school (for nonactivists).

Table 6: Change in the sense of personal control: «Compared to before taking up your party office [for activists] / job or university [for nonactivists], do you feel that your future is uncertain?»

	MORE THAN BEFORE	SAME AS BEFORE	LESS THAN BEFORE	Totals
NONACTIVISTS Row %	97 30.5%	142 44.6%	79 24.9%	318
ACTIVISTS Row %	20 17.4%	80 69.6%	15 13.0%	115
All Grps	117	222	94	433

Political involvement was matched by neither a boost nor a decrease in the activists' sense of personal control. Stronger changes were experienced in the control group when taking up a job or enrolling in a post-secondary school (table 6). And although more powerful young activists tend to express an increase in personal control after their political activation in greater number than lower-level militants, there are about as many of them as there are

¹² Obviously, studies exclusively focused on self-confidence can use richer batteries of indicators (e.g., Rotter 1966; Ziller 1977). The huge spectrum of factors examined in the present inquiry forced us to be parsimonious with the items.

self-confident nonactivists. Thus, there is little evidence to support Lasswell's hypothesis, not even if limited to "true" (i.e., most prominent) leaders¹³.

What characterizes the perception of self transformation in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood among young political activists is some sense of relative stability. Compared to nonactivists, they are to an extent less likely to feel that a change has taken place within themselves. An index of Perceived Inner Change from adolescence was built on the basis of all the items described in this section (§ 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). The mean standardized scores are .07 for nonactivists and -.24 for activists. In terms of their perceived sociability, ideological consistency, and personal control, activists are more likely to state that they moved unaltered from adolescence to early adulthood.

Table 7: Standardized means of the index of Perceived Inner Change with respect to adolescence by family politicization (i.e., presence of a politically active family member)

GROUP		RELATIVE ACTIVIST	INDEX OF CHANGE	N
NONACTIVISTS	NO		.08	269
NONACTIVISTS	YES		.03	46
ACTIVISTS	NO		.07	17
ACTIVISTS	YES		-.25	93

¹³ However, it may be that the time at which the survey was carried out (during the crumbling of the Italian political system under the attacks of the judges of Tangentopoli) the feeling of personal control of those activists who were sons or relatives of senior party officers and representatives was being eroded. Only 9.1% of them said to feel more confident in the future than «before», as opposed to 23.5% of the young activists without relatives in politics.

Evidence thus shows that there is more continuity in the perception of the Self among those young people who take a political career than among "ordinary" young people. This is especially the case for those young activists who have one or more politicized relatives (table 7). The politicization of the activist's family plays a part in rendering the political initiation smoother from a psychological point of view. Such a potentially unstable career choice comes to be viewed as natural for the "political heir" as it is natural for the other youth to find a job or become a university student. This (very common) type of young political activist resembles more the carpenter's son entering the family workshop than Saint Paul on the road to Damascus.

3. *Dealing with the World: Patterns of Value Orientations*

In the myriad of analyses of political culture¹⁴, some empirical tool-kits have higher diffusion than others. A number of these constructs correspond to the orientations that, according to some hypotheses (cf. chapter II, § 3.1),

¹⁴ The "underlying", "latent", "profound" schemes that are held to rule our cognition and judgment have been dissected by scholars from virtually every research tradition without reaching a single firmly established understanding. The boundaries of the 'political culture' theme are shifting: «The concept of political culture has many members in its family, few of which share much more than a common name» (Gibbins 1989, 3). This conceptual anarchy is paralleled by «the fundamental failure to settle on an operational definition of the internal structure of political culture, that is, of the variables of which it is composed» (Lane 1992, 363).

go along with political ambition: authoritarianism, dogmatism, complexity, attitudinal consistency (or ideologization).

3.1. Authoritarianism

A shortened version of the original F-scale, coherent with its successive reformulations (e.g., Brown 1965, 476 ff.; Dekker-Ester 1987; Lagrange 1989; Scheepers et al. 1990), has been used for the analysis of authoritarianism¹⁵.

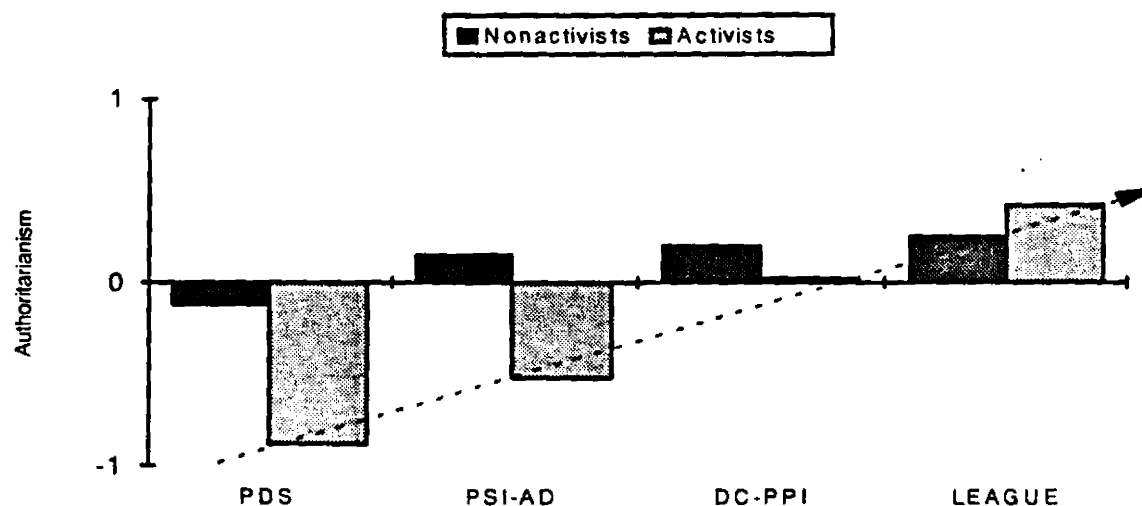
Contrary to the hypothesis, activists have less authoritarian attitudes than "ordinary" young people: the standardized means of the Authoritarianism index are $-.29$ for activists and $.10$ for nonactivists. This is even more the case for the most powerful activists in our sample (national councillors, executives, and leaders in the youth parties): their mean score on the index ($-.50$) is less than half that of local sub-leaders ($-.21$). Party youth organizations, thus, appear to promote to higher offices those members who keep a more open mind¹⁶. In any case,

¹⁵ The Authoritarianism index to which reference is made is composed of three items on a 5-points Likert scale: «People can be divided in two distinct classes: the weak and the strong», «Obedience and respect for authority should be learnt soon in life», «Too much familiarity leads ultimately to lack of respect». The factor score coefficients used for creating the index were respectively: $.43$, $.53$, $.53$. The scale's reliability (Cronbach alpha) is $.74$.

¹⁶ A malicious alternative explanation could be that higher officers are more artful about socio-psychological scales, and therefore are more successful in masking their opinions conveniently (given the negative stigma associated with the Authoritarianism index). An argument against such an interpretation, however, is the lack of influence of education (which should imply more familiarity with social research instruments) on authoritarianism.

evidence is not as expected: authoritarianism declines the more youth is involved in political activities.

Figure 1: Standardized means of the Authoritarianism index by party preference (for nonactivists) and party membership (for activists)



There are strong party differences, however. Young politicians of the PDS and the Northern League are at the opposite poles of the scale, while those of the PSI-AD and DC lie somewhere in the middle, closer respectively to the PDS and the League (figure 1). The authoritarianism of the young party activists (even more than that of voters) seems to accurately describe each party position in the Left-Right continuum of the Italian party system at the time of the study (Ricolfi 1994b, 38)¹⁷. Controlling for party

¹⁷ Generally speaking, this interpretation is consistent with the old criticisms of the F-scale as a construct for capturing an ideological-free cognitive configuration (Christie 1954; Eysenck 1954). In fact, other research also shows that the scale fundamentally records a basic attachment or rejection of right-wing principles (cf. Eckhardt 1991).

affiliation, other factors often found to affect authoritarianism, such as education or class location (Lipset 1960, ch. 4; Kohn-Schooler 1983, 19; Dekker-Ester 1987), prove to be irrelevant in our research context.

3.2. Dogmatism

A shortened version of the traditional D-10 Scale was adopted for the analysis of dogmatism¹⁸. Differences between activists and nonactivists on this index turn out to be almost non existent (-.08 and .03 respectively). Few young party militants show high scores, either positive or negative. Women activists are markedly less dogmatic (-.40) than men (-.01), as well as their apolitical counterparts of the same gender (-.11 vs. .21). Interestingly, this corresponds to a rather commonly held view of women in Italian politics - more autonomous and «uncomfortable with a political culture which demands conformity within pre-set hierarchies» (Guadagnini 1993, 196; cf. also Di Nicola 1983, 122-9; Bettin-Magnier 1989, 81)¹⁹. The younger group of

¹⁸ The Dogmatism index was constructed from responses to three 5-points Likert scales: «The best way to live is to choose friends and peers with the same tastes», «One should not attack people sharing his (or her) same ideals», «Before taking a decision, it is always wise to ask trustworthy persons». They were the three most significant items in DiRenzo's (1967a) comparison of Italian MPs and «ordinary» people (exception made for another item: «There have been few true thinkers in history», the meaning of which appeared dubious and which also scored poorly in absolute terms in DiRenzo's work). Responses were standardized and factor-analyzed. Factor score coefficients (respectively .60, .73, and .60) were used as weights for summing up the standardized values into the index (Cronbach alpha's reliability = .71). The scores presented in this section correspond to the standardized means on the index.

¹⁹ The ideal message of a woman with a long political career to her younger colleagues is revealing: «To the newly elected women I would like to say: "you feel dislocated, and it is right like that; this is

activists (under 25 years old) also shows less dogmatism (-.22) than their older peers (.01), possibly sharing with their female colleagues a stronger sense of autonomy from organizational rules. Viewed in this light, activists in the Northern League seem to be extraordinarily loyal to their party structure and ideals: their high level of dogmatism (.49) is unsurpassed by any other subgroup in the sample. As with authoritarianism, the young party officer in the League stands out from his colleagues of the other parties. Despite the relatively recent character of the League, the young activist of that party in the early 1990s resembles the traditional mass party cadre, tightly incorporated into the organizational structure and a true believer in the party's mission.

3.3. Complexity

Researchers have content-analyzed political leaders' talks in terms of the «integrative complexity» of their views (Driver-Steufert 1969; Tetlock 1983a; Tetlock 1983b; Tetlock 1985; Tetlock-Boettger 1989). In these works «integrative complexity» is referred to as a sensitivity to nuances and counterarguments to one's beliefs, and as an aptitude for multicausal analyses of facts and events. In filling out a questionnaire, a complex cognitive attitude leads the respondent to be dissatisfied with closed response

not an environment like all the others and those who pretend that they see nothing strange are prepared to play a mediocre role. It is better to preserve this sense of incredulity for how you see how things work (or not work)» (Piva 1994, 79).

items, and, on the contrary, to add categories, rephrase existing ones, give "it depends" answers, and openly acknowledge the multivariate nature of causation in human and social affairs. Complexity has thus been treated here as a latent personality feature emerging from four indicators: a) being moderate in one's opinions (i.e., the mean number of non-polar responses to the whole battery of Likert items); b) multicausality in answering an open-ended question on the «most serious problem of the country and its causes» (dichotomized: unicausal/multicausal)²⁰; c) uncertainty generated by closed-ended response items as revealed by the respondent's suggesting a non-coded alternative answer (dichotomized: coded/non coded); d) complexity as synthetically evaluated (on a three-points scale) by the interviewer²¹ on the basis of Tetlock's definition of the concept (cf. chapter II, § 3.1). Our

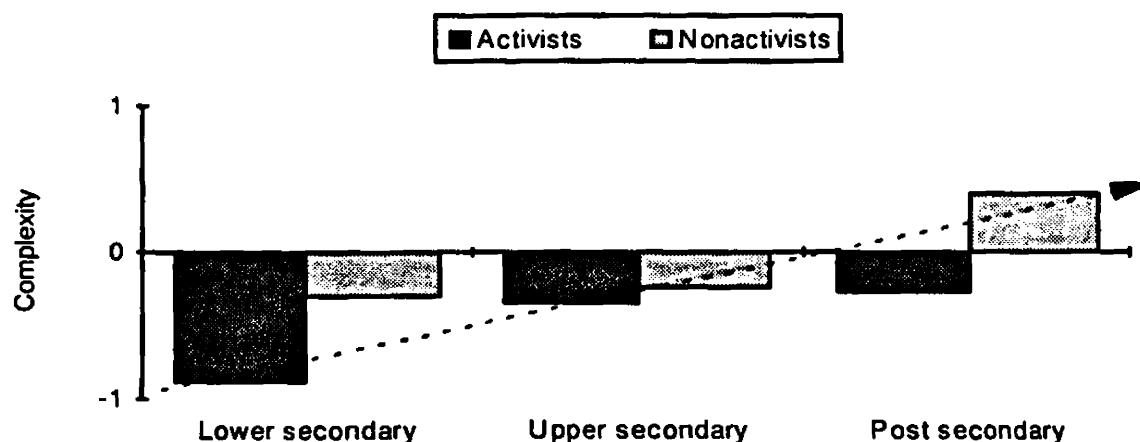
²⁰ As regards the substance of these answers, a post hoc coding shows the same ordering of categories of problems among activists and nonactivists. The «low quality of the ruling class» (including political corruption, leaders' incapacity, and elites' inadequacy) is signalled by 52.8% of the "ordinary" youth and 41.3% of the activists; «cultural crisis» (including secularization, moral weakening, and other socially diffuse value blemishes) by 28.4% and 33.7% respectively; «economic problems» (such as unemployment, inflation, currency devaluation) by 21.2% and 29.7% respectively; «State organization defects» (bad institutional arrangements, malfunctioning of bureaucracy, excess of legislation, and fiscal inequality) by 20.8% of the control group and only 5.0% of the politically active group. All in all, activists appear more fatalist and indulgent in relation to the difficulties at the State level.

²¹ Methodologically, in Tetlock's studies coding was undertaken by trained students who were «unaware of the hypotheses to be tested and the sources of the textual material analyzed», and who have assessed the conceptual structure of the texts independently, reaching a good inter-rater convergence (about $r=.85$) (Tetlock-Boettger 1989, 211). For practical reasons, no multiple arbitrators could be used in the present study. However in this case the external subjective judgment of complexity was not the only indicator for the concept.

Complexity index corresponds to the factor scores of the principal component (explaining 36.6% of the variance) that results from a factor analysis of these four variables.

Evidence goes against the hypothesis that political activists are more complex than nonactivists: on average, "ordinary" young people have a higher level of cognitive complexity (.13) than political activists (-.25)²². Moreover, the high variability and lack of correspondence between complexity and party preference or membership confirms the merely cognitive nature of this index. In none of the cases are differences among activists and nonactivists significant.

Figure 2: Complexity and education (last school attended) among activists and nonactivists



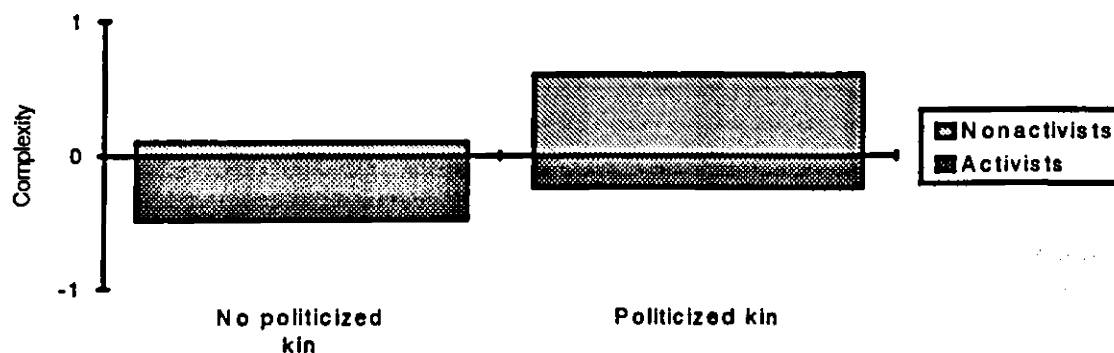
In both samples, however, education enhances complexity considerably (figure 2). In fact, social class effects are not significant once education is controlled. A similarly

²² These scores correspond to the standardized means of the index.

positive influence is exerted by parental education on offsprings' complexity, although to a lesser extent for activists.

Associational affiliation (beyond party membership) also seems to promote more nuanced viewpoints (+.41 on the standardized mean). Inasmuch as it reveals a stronger sensitivity to others' opinions, thus, complexity could be the missing intermediate link - at the cognitive level - between social participation and civic virtue (Almond-Verba 1963, 266-73)²³.

Figure 3: Family politicization and complexity (standardized means)



Family politicization (i.e., having one or more politically active relatives) also has an effect on complexity (figure 3). However, while nonactive sons of

²³ Further proof of this is given by the inverse correlation between complexity and personal network density (-.20). Those people who live in more varied social contexts develop more multi-faceted attitudes. The socio-psychological reason for this is likely to be that «multiple redundant paths of communication in a dense clique increase the accuracy with which attitudes of others are perceived and hence increase the agreement of one person's attitude with another's» (Erickson 1982, 164).

activists are very conscious of the controversial nature of the real world, the young who decide to follow their elders' lead into politics have more definite views: their complexity is much lower ($-.84$ in standardized terms) than that of the nonactive sons of activists. It is as if second-generation activists had set aside the awareness of the intricacies of politics communicated to them by their politically active kins. Perhaps the very first years of militancy obliges them to come to grips with doubts and indecisions, in spite of the complexity acquired as a consequence of the political participation of some family member. If this is the case, then complexity may well be an initial spur to political activism, but a spur that disappears afterwards. Unfortunately, there is no way to test here the stability of activists' orientations, nor the validity of this emerging hypothesis.

3.4. Attitudinal Consistency

Whether or not it is less true than in the past, political parties still constitute depositories of ideologies more than any other social group. As a consequence, parties should attract more ideologically-minded people - that is to say, people whose value orientations are organized in a highly consistent fashion. Young party politicians can therefore be expected to have a higher «attitudinal consistency» than their nonactive counterparts.

In political research, «attitudinal consistency measures assume that persons who use ideological dimensions

of judgment ought to display attitudes that fit into ideologically coherent patterns" (Wyckoff 1987, 196). Various solutions have been suggested to identify these patterns and measure consistency accordingly; the method described by Barton and Parsons (1977) is used here²⁴. From the clustering of five attitude items ("ethnocentrism", "approval of radical societal transformations", "importance of loyalty to hierarchy", "importance of authority in childhood education", and "opposition to abortion laws"²⁵), three typical response patterns have been identified. These are regarded as basic ideological profiles²⁶. They appear to

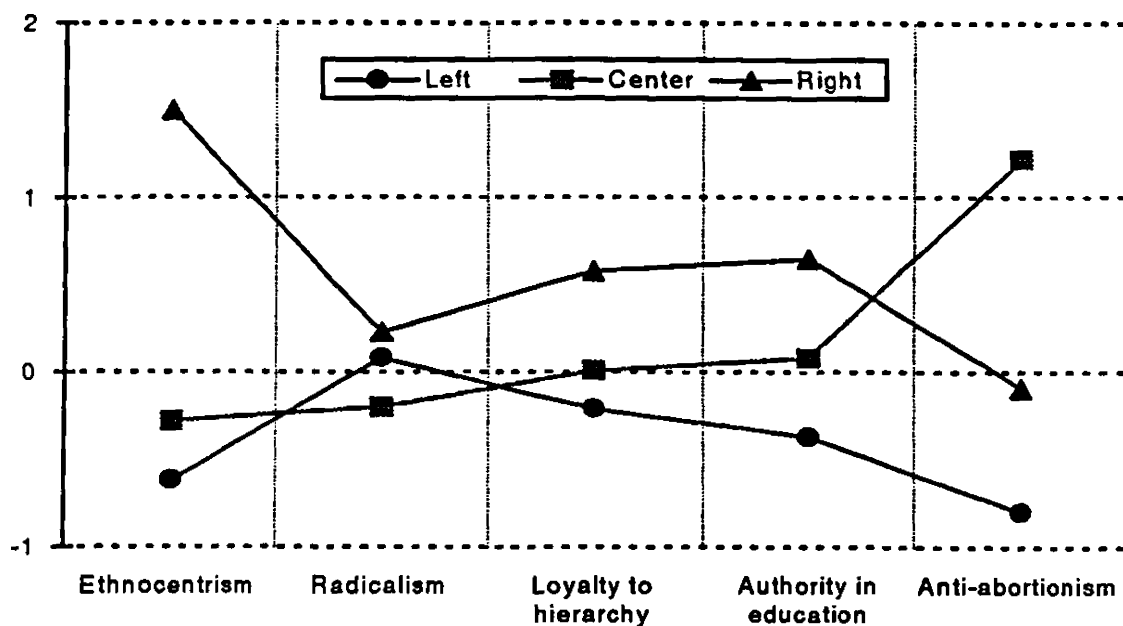
²⁴ "Classical" studies (e.g., Converse 1964) used the average correlation coefficient between pairs of items in elite and mass samples as indicators of attitudinal consistency. However, it has been demonstrated that this approach leads to unreliable results (Barton-Parsons 1977). Correlations can be very low even when members of a sample have highly structured attitudes (i.e., close to a common average score) but there are only minor variations around the group mean. Barton and Parsons have proposed taking the individual as the unit to be characterized as consistent or inconsistent with respect to the standards of basically consensual yardstick groups. These groups can be defined through cluster analysis. Each unit's distance from the mean of its most proximate standard group (or cluster) is interpreted as a proxy for its attitudinal consistency. The closer the unit is to the core of the cluster, the more consistent it is with an ideological profile. "Absolute" or "relative" scores (i.e., standard deviations above or below the population mean on the item score) on the attitude scales can be used to measure consistency with the standard response pattern. A relative measure was preferred here.

²⁵ The items were phrased as follows: «It would be better if immigrants could live in areas especially for them, given their cultural differences»; «In a world such as ours, only the deepest transformations could really improve the situation»; «It is better to lose the esteem of work peers than that of superiors»; «Obedience and respect for authority should be learnt soon in life»; «Abortion is never acceptable». The latter item was not proposed in a Likert fashion, but as an option among four possible attitudes on abortion.

²⁶ A k-means algorithm was used to explore a wide range of possible partitions (from 10 to 2 clusters solutions). Obviously, when the number of clusters increases, the amount of explained variance increases too (i.e., the internal homogeneity of the clusters and the degree of differentiation among them). The three clusters' solution seemed

correspond to left-wing, catholic-center, and right-wing value orientations (fig. 4)²⁷. Closeness to the core of these clusters can be interpreted as an indicator of attitudinal consistency of respondents.

Figure 4: Basic ideological profiles: plot of standardized means for each cluster (activists and nonactivists together)



Activists seem to be more consistent than nonactivists, but the difference is small. In standardized terms, the activists' mean distance from the core of the cluster is lower than average ($-.17$), while the nonactivists' mean

particularly satisfactory. If one increases the number of groups further, only marginal increases of explained variance are obtained.

²⁷ voters and activists of the PDS (67.0%) and the PSI (46.1%) can be found mainly in the first cluster; those of the DC (51.9%) and the League (62.5%) in the second; voters of the MSI (66.7%) in the third. Only one activist (from the League) belongs to the third (right-wing) cluster.

score is only slightly above the average (.06). Among both activists and nonactivists, members of the left-wing cluster (-.26) tend to stick together around a common set of attitudes more than those of the center (.01) and the right (.45)²⁸. Regardless of one's political involvement, thus, within our sample of young people the subculture of the left proves to be more solid than that of the center, while that of the right seems much less structured.

Attitudinal consistency decreases slightly with education ($r_s = -.17$). Education leads to more personalized belief systems fostering a higher degree of political sophistication. Consequently, the policy position of the politically sophisticated «will appear inconsistent when measured by standards based on what goes together in the population as a whole or even in the elite as a whole» (Barton-Parsons 1977, 178).

Yet the strongest determinant of the variance of attitudinal consistency among activists is - once again - their family politicization. Young militants lacking family ties with senior politicians are much closer to a standard pattern of political values (-.56). They may afford little cultural eclecticism, as if allegiance to the basic ideology could compensate for their entry as strangers within the party social circles. In other words, attitudinal consistency is a significant predictor of political involvement for those young party activists who joined the

²⁸ Note that the scores refer to the distance from the core of the ideological cluster. Hence, higher positive values stand for less consistent belief systems.

party independently of family influence. They appear to be the "true believers" who conform to a core of socially identifiable values typical of the subculture that each party claims to represent. On the whole they are only a minority of activists, however, as will be seen in the next chapter.

4. Conclusion: Personality Traits and Youth Political Activism

Past research on the modal political personality seems to lead to highly controversial results (cf. chapter II, § 3.1). The main empirical findings illustrated in the previous sections show that psycho-cultural factors do not help to distinguish between activists and the control group. Multivariate analysis attests that the only significant variable at a $p < .01$ level is an increase in the "sense of group belonging" with the entry into early adulthood (table 8). The theoretical meaning of this variable is far from clear, however. It is difficult to say whether it is the expression of a preexisting "need" for group affiliation, or rather an unavoidable, but not necessarily desired, consequence of participating in the life of any structured organization.

Table 8: Logistic regression of youth political activism (no=0; yes=1) on self-perceptions and value orientations

Independent variables	(b)	SE (b)
Change in Sense of Sociability = more than in adolescence	.174	.143
Change in Sense of Group Belonging = more than in adolescence	.848*	.150
Change in Sense of Group Attunement = more than in adolescence	.299	.155
Change in Sense of Coherence = more than in adolescence	.182	.148
Change in Sense of Ideological Clearness = more than in adolescence	.212	.224
Change in Sense of Personal Control = more than in adolescence	.262	.188
Authoritarianism index	.281	.148
Dogmatism index	.043	.153
Complexity index	-.384	.154
Attitudinal consistency index	.311	.148
Constant	-1.001*	.223

N = 391;

* P < .01

The psycho-cultural dimensions analyzed in this chapter are not unimportant in themselves. They shed light on interesting differences of Italian parties' cultures among these parties' novices. They also indicate that family continuity in political activism influences the new recruits in many ways: it makes their choice to become active less traumatic, their cognitive attitudes somewhat more complex, and their belief system less ideologically constrained. Yet, the conclusion remains that the Italian young party activists of the early 1990s are hardly distinguishable from the politically apathetic individuals of the same age on psycho-cultural grounds²⁹.

²⁹ The data of this study allow for some more analysis of activists' culture, but these are neither significant for the theoretical problem in question nor do they point out relevant differences between activists and the control group. In particular, as shown in table 9, young

It might still be claimed that there were differences between activists' and nonactivists' orientations before activists entered politics, but they have disappeared afterwards. This claim seems unlikely, however, as it implies that by taking different career routes activists and nonactivists have become similar. No existing theory holds that a differentiation of status leads to psychological and cultural homogeneity among social actors.

Overall, evidence has shown that political activists and nonactivists tend to have similar psycho-cultural traits. There is thus a strong case against the mainstream explanations for political ambition which are based on personality.

politicians appear to be more cosmopolitan than a national sample of 2,500 young people (Cavalli 1994, 6). However, this difference decreases markedly when one controls for individual and parental education.

Table 9: Sense of belonging to territorial unities (row %)

	Sample	TOWN	REGION	ITALY	EUROPE	THE WORLD
IN 1ST PLACE	Activists	24.7	10.7	24.7	16.1	23.6
	It. Youth	35.0	12.4	35.2	4.1	13.3
IN 2ND PLACE	Activists	15.9	7.9	16.1	18.4	21.6
	It. Youth	19.7	21.5	30.6	16.8	11.4

CHAPTER VI

THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF YOUNG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

1. Introduction

Despite the huge attention paid to the processes of intergenerational mobility by modern sociology, in the «innumerable studies of the social origins of elites [which] have been written since the beginning of the twentieth century», usually «only the occupations and education of politicians have been investigated; [...] the question of family background has almost invariably been ignored» (Kaelble 1981, 81 and 112). Yet, such a question is fundamental in relation to a key aim of this study and of all research on political recruitment: to «provide information about the distribution of opportunities within a society and about the likely extent of "sponsored" rather than competitive upward mobility» (Parry 1969, 105).

It is well-known that these opportunities are very much restricted for the access to higher political offices. A comparative analysis of legislatures, for instance, shows that «the "iron law of social bias" remains a global phenomenon» (Norris 1995, 1). But does this law apply at lower levels of political involvement? Is it effective even in the early manifestations of political ambition - in our case, among the activists of the Italian party youth organizations? Seeking to answer this question, individual- and family-level data which to some extent go beyond the

usual background information will be examined in the analysis that follows.

2. Ascribed Advantages: Gender, Class Origins, and Family Politicization

Of the several social categories which are under-represented among political elites, women are in the foreground. A gender gap exists worldwide, to a varying degree, in political groups and institutions (e.g., Blondel 1973, 78-9; Putnam 1976, 32-3; Verba 1987, 285; Carroll 1993; Norris 1995, 26). An explanation which currently seems to prevail attributes this gap to the differences of female and male ambition: women are apparently more issue-oriented (Costantini 1990). Generally speaking, gender-specific socialization patterns are held to generate lower aspirations to competitive and risk-bearing jobs among women (Gilligan 1982).

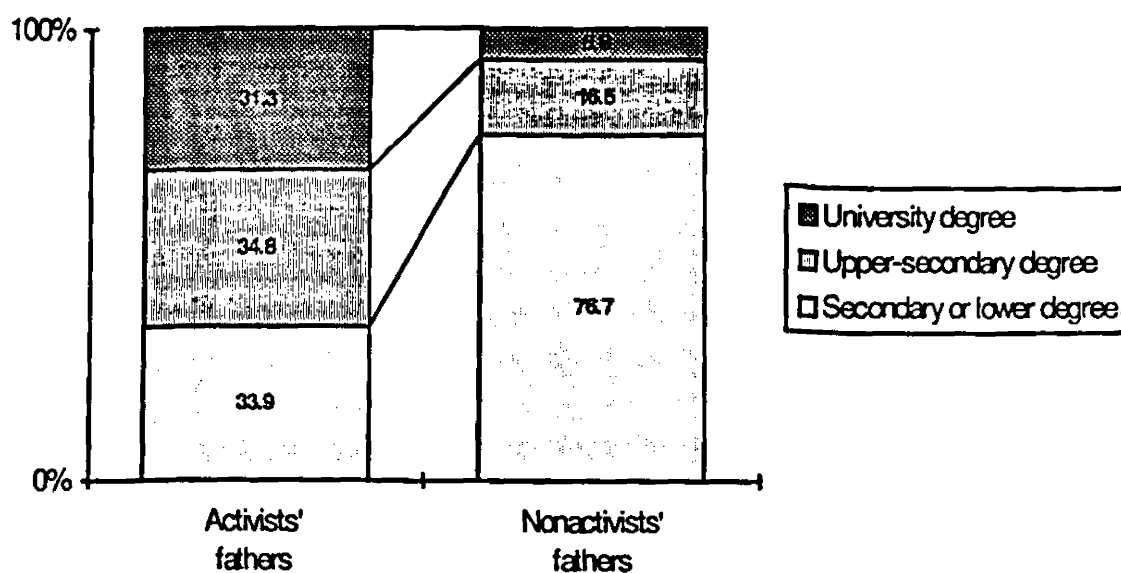
Cultural differences linked to gender appear strong in Italian politics, where politically active women are described as «strangers» who receive «tokens» (Balbo 1994)¹. Younger generations seem to make no exception. Men are a large majority (80.9%) of youth party leaders and militants. Differences across parties are small. In all of them,

¹ In the Italian case, the possible causes of the (self)-exclusion of women from politics are examined in Zincone (1985, 155), Maria Weber (1986, 90 ff.), and Guadagnini (1993), who underscores the incompatibility of party cultures and women's culture. The many attempts by several parties and by the State (such as a compulsory fifty-fifty quota of candidates in the 1994 election) to induce a gender balance in political representation are reviewed in Bettin-Magnier (1989, 90-2).

moreover, in the higher offices of the organization fewer women are incumbents. This would appear to be in line with the theories of gender-specific ambitions resulting from different socialization patterns.

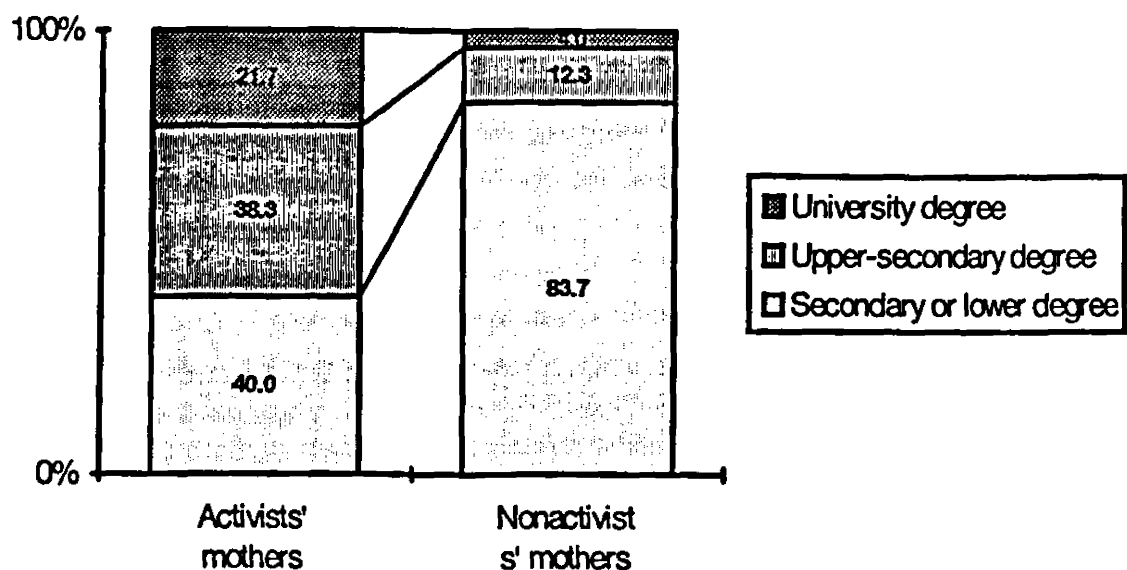
Perhaps, however, not all is due to socialization. Data show that gender handicaps can be overcome, provided young women possess comparatively greater political and social resources - transmitted by their families - than their male colleagues. On the one hand, young women activists tend to "inherit" their status more than men: 22.7% of them have a relative who is (or was) a parliamentarian, mayor, member of a regional council, or party leader (the corresponding figure for male activists is 9%). On the other hand, young female activists more often than their male counterparts are daughters of upper class parents (59.1% vs. 50.5%) and of graduate mothers (36.4% vs. 18.3%). Their mothers, in addition, succeeded more often in their job careers: 27.3% of them are managers, entrepreneurs, or professionals, as against 6.4% of the mothers of the young male politicians. In sum, normal socialization patterns which are at the basis of women's political passivity may be counterbalanced by the spur of family politicization, privilege, and mothers' emancipation. Young women seem to be able to have a say in politics if they have an adequate family background.

Figure 1: Education of the fathers of young political activists and young population of the same age^a



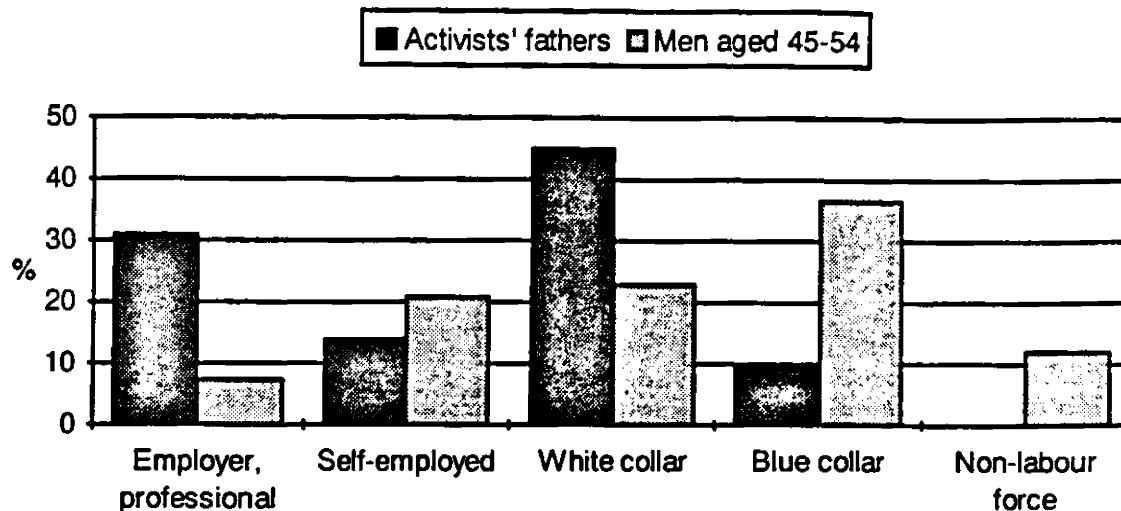
^a Based on Istat (1995a, 103-4). Data refer to the education of Italian men aged 45-54 in 1991

Figure 2: Education of the mothers of young political activists and young population of the same age^a



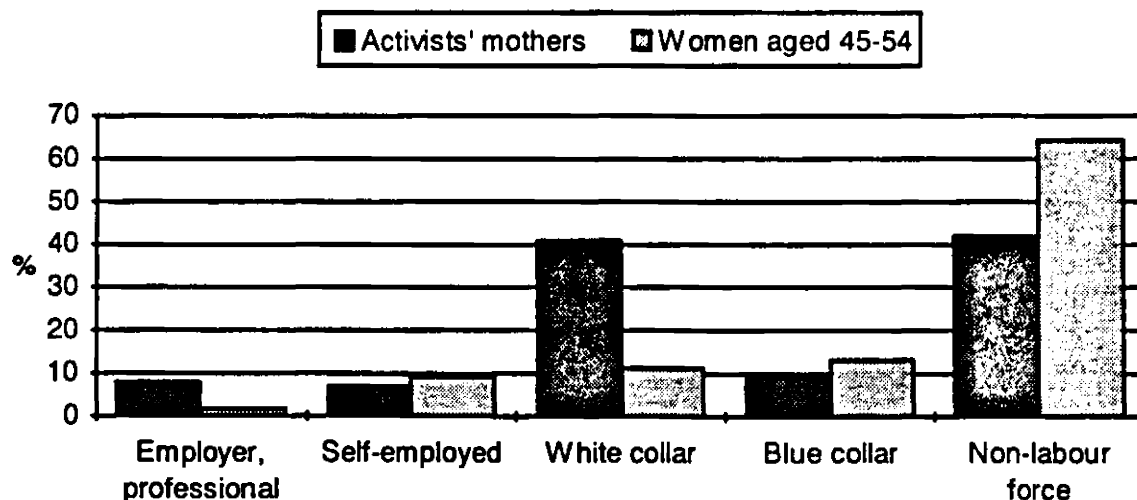
^a Based on Istat (1995a, 105-6). Data refer to the education of Italian women aged 45-54 in 1991

Figure 3: Occupation of the fathers of young political activists and male population of the same age^a



^a Employer = more than 10 employees; Self-employed = small employer (less than 10 employee), trader, self-employed manual worker; White collar = private and public employees (including managers, university professors, teachers); Blue collar = industrial and rural workers. Population data based on Istat (1995a, 174-6), referring to the Italian male population aged 45-54 in 1991

Figure 4: Occupation of the mothers of young political activists and female population of the same age^a



^a Occupations classified as in figure 3. Population data based on Istat (1995a, 177-9), referring to the Italian female population aged 45-54 in 1991

Although women activists more than their male counterparts are drawn from among the better off, both tend to over-represent the upper strata of Italian society. Their fathers' and mothers' educational and current occupational status are markedly higher than in the youth population as a whole (figures 1 to 4). University graduates are three times more numerous and high school graduates twice as numerous among the parents of young political activists than among the parents of their age peers. Similarly, the number of businessmen and professionals among activists' parents is three times higher than in the population as a whole; the number of mothers with white-collar occupations among activists is twice as large as among the mothers of Italian young people². Only among the Young Communists and the Young Socialists does one find some young party activists from relatively lower class family backgrounds (13.3% have working class origins); but none of them is a national leader.

Data about Italian young party activists, thus, confirms and qualifies the rule: the better-off tend to be more involved in politics from a young age (Milbrath-Goel 1977, 90 ff.; Milbrath 1981, 221-5; Percheron-Chiche 1991, 173). «The importance of socioeconomic status for participation in the earliest stages of adulthood», that Beck and Jennings (1982, 96) found in the U.S., is evident in Italy too. Young party activists' parents belong to the

² Similar results were found in a larger survey: more socially active young people are better-off than apathetics of the same cohort (De Lillo 1993, 81).

upper strata of both the hierarchy of educational credentials and that of occupational status.

This analysis can be expanded to consider the class position of the young as a result of the joint class position of their parents³. From the crosstabulation of the occupations of the fathers and the mothers of respondents, six social classes are derived⁴.

³ To identify family class position with that of the male head of the household is the object of much debate (cf. Heath-Britten 1983; Goldthorpe 1983; Crompton-Mann 1988; Baxter 1994; for the Italian case, Beccalli 1991; Trifiletti 1991). Critics stress that this traditional approach should be abandoned inasmuch as gender inequalities diminish. Erikson's (1984) «dominance principle», consisting in assigning the family the highest class position held by either of its adult members (husband or wife), has become the solution most commonly adopted. However, the «dominance principle» seems somewhat inadequate when one is concerned with processes of intergenerational transmission and socialization (as is the case here), rather than with movements between social classes *per se* (cf. Lampard 1995). It is unlikely, for instance, that the sons of doctor-nurse couples are socialized in the same manner and with the same range of future occupational opportunities as the sons of doctor-lawyer couples. As class heterogamy characterizes 45.1% of the Italian couples, and 64.8% if housewives are included (Cobalti-Schizzerotto 1994, 146), from the class assignment of Italian families on the basis of combined (husband-and-wife) data emerges a picture which is substantially different from the existing images of stratification.

⁴ The six family classes (upper-upper, lower-upper, upper-middle, lower-middle, upper-lower, lower-lower) are obtained cross-tabulating the occupational positions of husband and wife on the basis of Erikson-Goldthorpe classes:

HUSBAND					
WIFE	I-II	III	IV	V-VI	VII
I-II	UPPER-UPPER	LOWER-UPPER	LOWER-UPPER	LOWER-UPPER	LOWER-UPPER
III	LOWER-UPPER	UPPER-MIDDLE	UPPER-MIDDLE	LOWER-MIDDLE	LOWER-MIDDLE
IV	LOWER-UPPER	UPPER-MIDDLE	LOWER-MIDDLE	UPPER-LOWER	UPPER-LOWER
V-VI	LOWER-UPPER	LOWER-MIDDLE	UPPER-LOWER	UPPER-LOWER	LOWER-LOWER
VII	LOWER-UPPER	LOWER-MIDDLE	LOWER-MIDDLE	LOWER-LOWER	LOWER-LOWER

Note that it makes no difference in this classification whether the economic head of the household is the husband or the wife. Moreover, if there is a housewife or an unemployed person in the couple, the class position of that spouse is assumed to be immediately inferior to the class position of the working spouse (e.g., a housewife married to an

Figure 5: Family class of young political activists and nonactivists

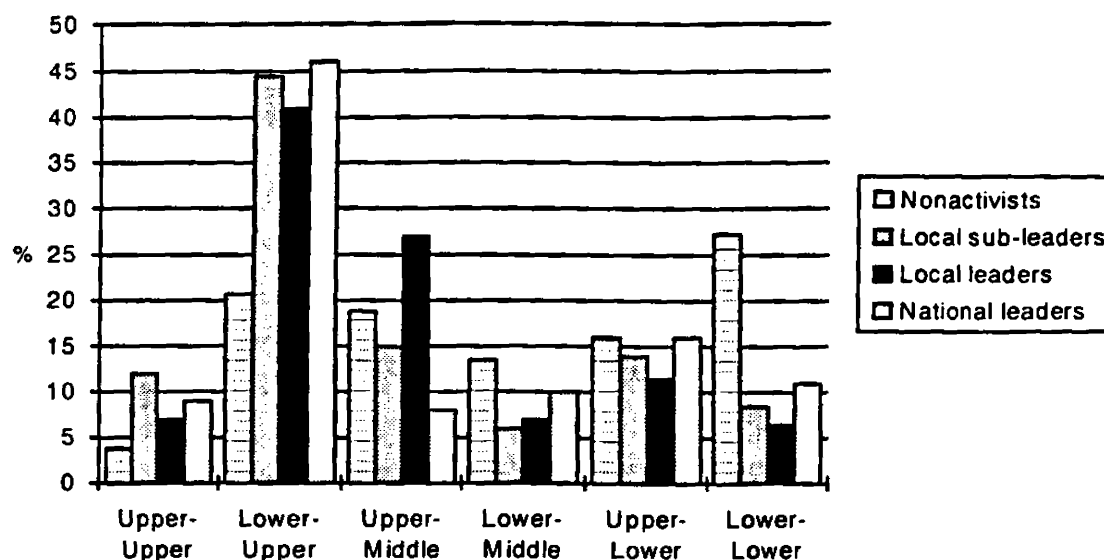


Figure 5 provides a synthesis of the class disparity between "ordinary" young people and party activists. More than half of the young politicians (52.2%) are offsprings of the upper classes: at least one of their parents belongs to the service class. This over-representation is almost entirely balanced by the under-representation of offsprings of the lower classes (22.6% of activists), while the number of young people from middle class origins is about the same in the two groups (25.2% among activists and 32.3% among nonactivists). Apart from this common class advantage, the figure shows that national leaders and lower level activists of the party youth organizations tend to come from very similar origins.

artisan [class IV] is considered to belong to class V; together they form an upper-lower class family).

Table 4: Highest political position achieved by a relative among activists and nonactivists

	NONE	PARTY MEMBER	LOCAL REPRESENT.	LEADER ^a	OTHER ^b
NONACTIVISTS	275	26	20	0	0
Row %	85.7%	8.1%	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%
ACTIVISTS	17	19	49	13	13
Row %	15.3%	17.1%	34.1%	11.7%	11.7%

a Mayor of capital city, regional councillor, MP, member of national party board

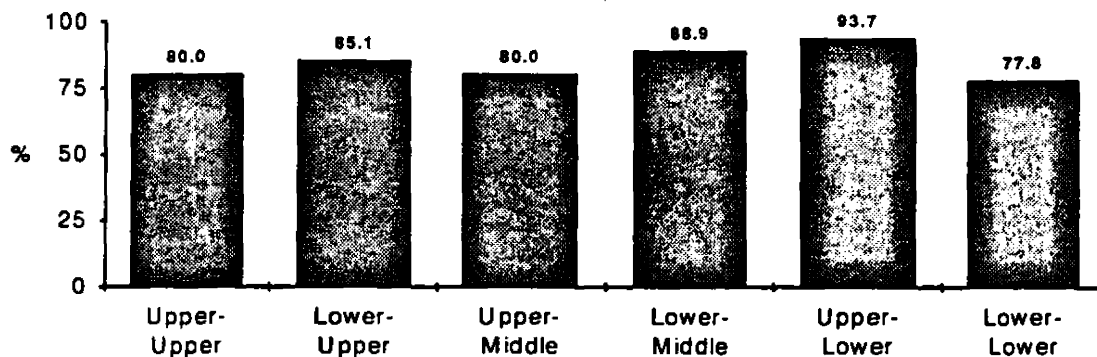
b Trade union or political movement activist

Prospective politicians not only belong to higher strata in society, but which are also closer to politics: The family transmission of political interests seems extraordinarily common (table 4). On average, youth party activists state that they have more than two politically active kins⁵; and more than 85% of them have some relative in politics, at least a party member. While this proportion remains the same at all levels of power within each party youth organization, local and national leaders are more often the direct heirs (in 15% of the cases) of someone who is (or was) a political leader of some importance (mayor, regional councillor, MP, member of a national party executive). This is in line with biographical accounts of famous political leaders and period pieces on student radicals [which] are replete with examples of people who

⁵ This average is slightly higher for national leaders (2.3) than for local militants (1.7).

have followed in their parents' footsteps by becoming political activists» (Beck-Jennings 1982, 98; cf. also Hyman 1959, 65-6; Marvick-Nixon 1961, 210; Prewitt 1970, 66-8; Aberbach et al. 1981, 72-5; Eldersveld 1989, 70). In contrast, only 15% of nonactivists' families include a party member - the same proportion that was found in a larger survey of the Italian population (Sapignoli 1995, 233).

Figure 6: Young party activists who have at least one politically active relative by family class



In our case, the higher politicization of the activists' families does not reflect the fact that activists are disproportionately drawn from upper class families (figure 6). The absence of association between family class and family politicization proves that the latter factor is neither a reflex nor a substitute of class origins for entering politics: it tends to be a constant. Thus, the meaning of the family "inheritability" of political activism cannot be merely accounted for by a class theory of political recruitment.

Table 5: Relatives of young party activists who are politically active

	N	%
FATHER	71	75.5
MOTHER	36	38.3
BROTHER	35	31.9
SISTER	8	8.5
GRAND-FATHER	24	10.3
GRAND-MOTHER	4	1.7
UNCLE	20	8.6
AUNT	12	5.2
COUSIN	15	6.5
OTHER	7	3.0

A strong family transmission of political activism was also found in an Italian study of the mid-1960s (Tosi 1980, 140): about half of a sample of militants of the DC and the PCI were sons of party members and officers. Tosi underscored the centrality of fathers as role models for political activity, and hypothesized that «through the father the family is inserted into a wider network of ideologically homogeneous relationships which indirectly reinforce and increase the authority of the father's influence» (*ibid.*, 143). Some thirty years later, as more than three quarters of the fathers of young party activists are politically active, the parental influence on the offsprings' political involvement seems even more manifest (table 5). Since our young activists hold more important offices than Tosi's militants, it may also be that the father's role counts more the higher the political ambitions. As we have seen, this does not mean that youth party activists are the children of first-rank political leaders; these young people can probably aim at more rewarding and occupationally safer family-sponsored careers

(journalism, jobs in public or semi-public bodies, and the like)⁶. Rather, it is the the lower level politician, unable to control other career opportunities, who is likely to incite his son's political ambition.

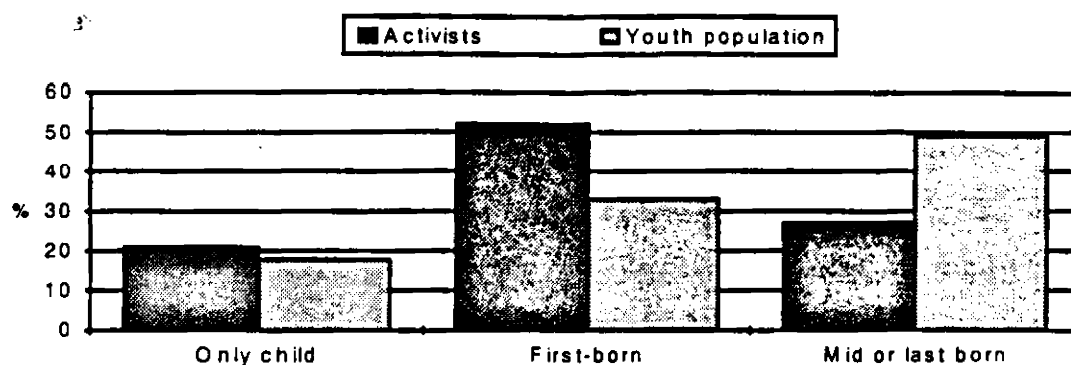
A large number (40%) of activists' fathers, furthermore, belong to an occupational category - civil servants - which cannot transmit job opportunities directly⁷. What they seem to transmit, instead, is a persisting commitment to the public sphere⁸. Such an intergenerational continuity, which was found to be a special feature of top Italian civil servants in a previous study (Putnam 1975, 96-7), can be explained either in psycho-cultural or in structural terms. Is it that fathers who are civil servants imbue their children with a vocation for public affairs? Or is it that they actively push them to reach a party office, for example by "suggesting" their names to the politicians they are in touch with as a result of their jobs?

⁶ Evidence of the ability of Italian political elites of the "First" Republic to secure access to high status jobs for their offsprings is reviewed in an anedoctal but well documented pamphlet (Locatelli-Martini 1991). In an equally journalistic manner, some information about the recruitment and promotion practices of young party leaders in the Italian political class in the early Republican era can be found in Cesarini Sforza (1963).

⁷ The number is even larger if we exclude the fathers of young activists in the Northern League, 80% of whom are employers or self-employed. *Leghisti's* fathers are also less educated (graduates are 25% only); their mothers are more often housewives (in half of the cases). On the whole, the families of young activists in the League seem to reflect the characteristics of that party's voters and leaders (cf. Diamanti 1992, 229-30; Diamanti 1993, 98 ff.).

⁸ The usually stronger politicization of individuals obtaining public jobs (especially at higher levels, as is the case here) must also be reckoned with.

Figure 7: Birth-order of young political activists and young population of the same age^a



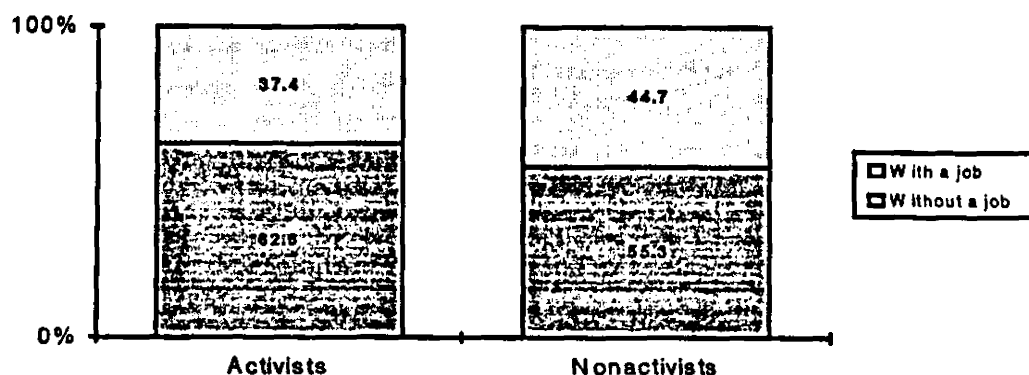
^a Based on the birth structure in 1989 of the Italian families officially formed in 1967-68 (Monnier 1991, 35). Note that 1968 is the mean, median, and modal year of birth of the political activists in the sample

Finally, another ascriptive attribute is sometimes held to have an impact on political activism: birth order (cf. chapter II, § 3.3). Indeed, first-borns constitute more than 50% of our young activists (figure 7). The relationship between birth order and family politicization is apparently consistent with two of the explanations discussed in chapter II - the «priority of heritage» and the «conformism» hypotheses. The fact that activists who are first-born children are more frequently the offsprings of elected parents (39%) than are only children (16.7%) or mid and last-born children (25%) could mean that young activists have either preceded their brothers in controlling the family political resources, or have felt more constrained to follow their parent's example, or both.

3. Early Achievements: Study or Work?

In Italy as elsewhere, on the basis of their social origins individuals' educational and job careers tend to follow typical tracks (Cobalti-Schizzerotto 1993; Cobalti-Schizzerotto 1994). As Italian youth party activists have an initial class advantage over people of their age, they should be more likely to succeed at school and in the labour market. In particular, they may be expected not only to reach greater educational achievements, but also to conclude their studies and find a job more easily. Both of these factors may be held to buffer the tendency to political apathy of young people, which many authors attribute to the increasing uncertainties that they must face in order to find a stable occupation (cf. chapter IV, § 1). As we will see, this set of hypotheses is only partially supported by our evidence.

Figure 8: Occupational status of activists and nonactivists



Activists and nonactivists belong to a cohort (18-30 years of age) whose social status is still fluid: some have not completed their education, some have not entered the

work force. Perhaps the crucial divide between them is whether they work regularly or not⁹. Having a job makes a difference in habits and duties, available time and money, life plans. It brings adulthood closer. The occupational profile of the sample is thus better described by dividing it into two broad categories: those who have a steady and paid job and those who do not (figure 8)¹⁰.

As expected, a greater number of activists have not yet entered the work force¹¹. Only among the young politicians of the Northern League students are not the majority (50%); in general, more than 60% of activists attend university or other schools, as against 24% of the 18-30 year olds in the population (Istat 1995a, 107; cf. also Istat 1995b, 31-4).

Yet, in contrast to what was expected, some aspiring politicians experience considerable difficulties in obtaining their post-secondary degree: 35.4% of activists over 25 are still university students. This means that they have three or more years of delay with respect to the prescribed timetable of university studies. This timetable is seldom respected, but Italian university students who

⁹ The second alternative includes both those who study and those who look for a job. Respondents who neither study nor work are a much lesser number in our sample of nonactivists (3.8%) than in census data and large surveys, perhaps because they did not fear stating their current, though irregular, work situation. Moreover, many students use to put their names on the unemployment register and may be classified as unemployed rather than students for official statistics.

¹⁰ Note that the former group is composed almost exclusively (86.3%) of individuals who have obtained an upper-secondary or lower degree. This proportion is about the same among activists (87.5%) and nonactivists (86.2%).

¹¹ Earlier data on the participants of the «courses of political formation» in the DC between 1982 and 1986 also recorded more than two thirds of students and unemployed young people (Berlinguer 1991, 24).

accumulate so large a delay are estimated to be only 10.4%¹². One cannot of course know whether political involvement is the cause of this poor university record, or, on the contrary, a mediocre *curriculum studiorum* renders politics more rewarding. Although activists tend to resort to the first interpretation to justify themselves¹³, the second may be no less convincing, given that a university degree is a legal requisite for access to the higher grade posts in the Italian civil service and that it affects occupational achievements in the private sector even more than in other countries (Cobalti-Schizzerotto 1994, 208-10; Pisati 1995, 278-9). Inasmuch as a university degree can constitute a cushion in case of political failure, activists should be stimulated to graduate, not to delay¹⁴.

Whatever the reason for this may be, activists have longer but also often slower educational careers than their age peers. Meanwhile only a minority of them has a regular

¹² Italian students who graduated in time constituted 14.8% of graduates in 1992; those who were late (*fuori corso*) 31.3% of the enrolled students; those with a delay of three or more years 33.1% of those with a delay (Censis 1995, 191). A more precise comparison with activists' educational achievements would require cohort data which are not available in Italy so far.

¹³ For instance, one of the former young leaders interviewed said: «I was in the process of a university career, I had already worked with professors... Therefore doing a good dissertation was important for me. But I was so much absorbed by political activity that I began to postpone writing. I didn't want to write a mediocre thesis. In the end, I did not graduate at all» (I.4, PDS leader).

¹⁴ As another former young leader interviewed recalls: «I was somehow obsessed by the cases of other young party officers of the Youth Socialist Movement - they did not graduate. So they had no job, while I wanted to graduate and have my own job» (I.6, PSI leader).

and paid job¹⁵. In large part they seem to take advantage of a better than average family socio-economic status to postpone both the exit from the educational system and the entry into the labour market. Probably, young party activists lean on their social origins to take time to decide whether politics shall be their adult job.

4. Conclusion: Social Origins and Youth Political Activism

Ascribed and achieved individual characteristics not only help to predict who belongs to a political elite, as recruitment studies always find (e.g., Aberbach et al. 1981, 46-67), but also who aspires to enter that elite. As we have seen in this chapter, even in political groups apparently open to any young volunteer, in positions lacking any real power and that may constitute no more than a very first stage of an uncertain political career, some categories of individuals are predominant. Activists of the Italian party youth organizations do not form a social microcosm of the generation to which they belong.

From the bivariate analysis conducted so far, we found that the entrance into a political career as a young person is affected by at least the following social background factors:

¹⁵ However, more than 20% of activists are self-employed or employers, that is about twice as much as Italians of their age (Istat 1995a, 171).

- * Gender (being male);
- * Urban residence (cf. chapter IV, § 3);
- * Father's education;
- * Mother's education;
- * Upper class family position;
- * Father's occupation in the civil service;
- * Family politicization (having active or elected relatives);
- * Birth order (being first born);
- * Respondent's occupation (not having entered the work force).

Table 6: Logistic regression of youth political activism (no=0; yes=1) on social origins factors

Independent variables	(b)	SE (b)
Gender (male=1)	.842*	.203
Urban residence	.158	.186
Father's education (university degree=1)	-.226	.221
Mother's education (university degree=1)	.268	.268
Family class position (upper-upper or lower-upper=1)	.139	.227
Father's occupational sector (public=1)	.055	.225
Politically active relative	2.222*	.247
Birth order (first born=1)	.344	.175
Occupation (having a job=1)	-.075	.187
Constant	.173	.323

N = 427;

* P < .01

While many of these variables overlap or are not significant, "gender" and "family politicization" have an independent and strong impact on youth political activism (table 6). In particular, family politicization more than any other background factor is at the basis of youth activism. To explain why, cultural and structural hypotheses can be made.

On the one hand, the families in which there is at least one adult activist may either influence their offsprings' career choices directly, or overexpose their children to political affairs to such an extent that these children develop more positive orientations towards political activity than the rest of their generation. Either by passing onto the young an allegiance to a set of principles or an ideology, or by eliminating the anti-politics attitudes to which the young are normally exposed, politically active relatives may promote a disposition to enter politics (cf. chapter II, § 3.3). On the other hand, the importance of family politicization can be explained, as it is in a growing body of research, in terms of pre-existing personal contacts with persons who are already active in political organizations. Such contacts create an opportunity for the prospective young activist to be easily integrated into an organizational structure (cf. chapter II, § 3.4)¹⁶.

These two types of explanations are not mutually exclusive. To bridge the gap between cultural and structural hypotheses about the processes by which one generation has

¹⁶ Having to account for parental influence on the participation in voluntary associations, Janoski and Wilson (1995) discuss two similar theories, which they call the «normativist» and the «structuralist» perspectives. These authors contend that the former theory explains activism in «community-oriented» and the latter in «self-oriented» associations. This distinction of voluntary groups assumes that «some forms of social participation have as their chief goal furthering an individual's self-interest, while others are intended more to protect the interests of a community as a whole» (*ibid.*, 274). As the discriminating capacity of this dichotomy is arguable, especially when seeking to place party activism in one or the other category, Janoski and Wilson's attempt to adjudicate between the two alternative hypotheses appears to fail.

an influence on the political activity of the next is indeed a goal of several recent studies (Gould 1993; McAdam-Paulsen 1993; Verba et al. 1995, 458). We shall return to this point in the last chapter. Before doing so, we need to consider that «it might be useful to think of origin statuses as being lodged in all the significant others one has, rather than conceiving origin statuses as located in parents alone» (Haller 1982, 24). Such an enlargement of the analysis is made possible by focusing on some aspects of the social networks of activists and nonactivists. This will enable us to obtain a more comprehensive view of the roots of young people's political ambition.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF YOUNG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

1. Personal Networks and Political Involvement

Political ambition may be stimulated by some characteristics of an individual's social relationships. In particular, opportunities for political involvement may be increased by the existence of prior social ties with potential political sponsors and by the control of a large social capital (cf. chapter II, § 3.4).

Data on the social relationships of the young party activists and nonactivists in both their professional¹ and non-professional² activity were therefore examined in this study. As far as the professional context is concerned, 438 relationships of the young activists and 1194 relationships of the nonactivists were mentioned; in the non-professional context, 411 and 1344 relationships were described by each category of respondents. Information was also collected about the relationships with their more politically involved family members («the relatives with whom you talk about politics»)³.

¹ For activists, «politics» was considered as the professional context; for nonactivists, «work» or «school-university» depending on the profession declared by the respondent.

² For both activists and nonactivists, reference was to «free time», «other activities», «personal relationships».

³ A more detailed description of network data and methods is provided in appendix A, which also includes an analysis of other aspects of activists' personal networks.

We shall first examine whether these personal networks comprise possible political sponsors (§ 2); then, we will turn to the larger networks of acquaintances directly accessible to the young activists and their apolitical counterparts (§ 3).

2. Sponsorship and Support Ties

As parties have to do with power explicitly, social relations within them tend to be viewed in a hierarchical way: associates are regarded as being «superior», «subordinate», or «equal» to the actor. Among activists in Italian party youth organizations, 50% of the members of their professional network are defined as «superiors» in formal or informal political status, the other half being split between «subordinates» (22.5%) and persons of «equal rank» (27.5%).

In particular, at least one more powerful and older politician can be found in 92% of the professional networks of the young activists. Almost a quarter of the activists stated that this politician was already acquainted with them ten years earlier (that is, when they were about 14 years old); in 75% of the cases he was known *before they entered politics*. Given the superiority of status, age, and duration of the tie with the young recruit, this network member can be regarded as the «mentor» who introduced his protégé into the party, subsequently counselling and sponsoring him. Hereafter we will call 'political mentors' those politicians in the network of a young activist who are older, more

powerful, not related to him, and known by him already before entering active politics. The concept of 'mentor' is borrowed from Levinson's analysis of the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood:

«The mentor is ordinarily several years older, a person of great experience and seniority in the world the young man is entering. No word currently in use is adequate to convey the nature of the relationship we have in mind here. Words such as 'counselor' or 'guru' suggest the more subtle meanings, but they have other connotations that would be misleading. The term 'mentor' is generally used in a much narrower sense, to mean teacher, adviser or sponsor. As we use the term, it means all these things, and more» (Levinson 1979, 97)⁴.

A similar role can also be performed by a relative actively engaged in politics. Almost every young activist (precisely, 96.4%) has either a tie with such a relative (21.6%) or with a non-kin mentor (11.7%) or with both (63.1%). By contrast, the young nonactivists who have a politically active kin or declare that they «know a politician well» are 48.1%. The opportunity to follow a sponsor's footsteps seems to be a paramount condition for entering politics at a young age.

⁴ To my knowledge, the only analysis of a mentor relationship in political life is Kellerman's (1978) case-study of Willy Brandt.

Table 1: The sponsors in the network of young party activists

	N	%
No sponsor	4	3.6
Party militant in the family	5	4.5
Party local officer in the family	8	7.2
City councillor in the family	2	1.8
Provincial-regional councillor in the family	7	6.3
MP-national party officer in the family	2	1.8
Mentor only	13	11.7
Mentor + Party militant in the family	14	12.6
Mentor + Party local officer in the family	21	18.9
Mentor + City councillor in the family	18	16.2
Mentor + Provincial-regional councillor in the family	14	12.6
Mentor + MP-national party officer in the family	3	2.7

Mentors and family sponsors intertwine in activists' networks (table 1). However, mentors can be found in the networks of 77% of the activists without politicized relatives, but in only 59% of the networks of the activists who have active or elected family members. Thus, political mentors are often the substitutes for politically active fathers, mothers, grandparents, uncles, elder brothers or cousins. As their mean age is 10-11 years higher than that of the activists, they fit perfectly with Levinson's (1979, 99) ideal-type.

Table 2: The sponsors in the network of young activists of different parties

SPONSORS	DC	PDS	PSI-AD	LEGA
NONE	1	2	0	1
Column %	2.0%	5.7%	0.0%	6.2%
MENTOR	10	1	1	1
Column %	20.0%	2.9%	10.0%	6.2%
RELATIVE	3	12	2	7
Column %	6.0%	34.3%	20.0%	43.8%
MENTOR+RELATIVE	36	20	7	7
Column %	72.0%	57.1%	70.0%	43.8%
All Grps	50	35	10	16

The presence of some sponsors, and of mentors especially, is most noticeable in the "establishment parties" *par excellence* of 1993: the DC and the PSI (table 2). Activists in the youth organizations of these parties are usually linked to both a politicized relative and a mentor. Membership in a personal corrente or in a patron-directed group is a possible explanation for such a hierarchical structure of personal relationships in the political life of young activists in these parties⁵.

The importance of political sponsors in the activists' social world is borne out by other evidence. In describing network relationships, respondents were also asked to indicate the persons whom they ask for help in case of «economic», «affective», «ethical/religious», «work-

⁵ In particular, the embeddedness of Young Christian Democrats in *correnti* cutting across party generations may explain why people over 40 years of age constitute 23.2% - more than twice the average - of the members of their professional networks.

related», and «political» (for activists only) problems. Prospective politicians find more often support on «affective» and «ethical» issues than on other matters (respectively 27% and 20.9% of the cases) in their professional context, whereas nonactivists tend to fall back on colleagues mostly for «economic» problems (22.7% of the cases) and seldom for less mundane questions (5.3% for «ethical» and 10.2% for «affective» matters). Young activists seem to share more intimacy within their occupation than nonactivists, while they share less outside their political work: they are relatively unlikely to find support for solving «ethical» (22.6% vs. 34.8% in the control group) and «affective» predicaments (33% vs. 50.9% in the control group) among non-political friends.

These tendencies change with age and position. Older and more powerful militants claim that they rely less on party companions for affective and moral help, and conversely depend more on political relationships for material well-being: 23.1% of those over 25 years old and 22.2% of the national leaders even receive economic support from members of their political network. This happens most frequently among the *Giovani Popolari* (24.1% of the cases) who are probably involved in a more structured political career pattern and thus see this dependence as a more "natural" phenomenon⁶. For this group of activists, politics has become a job in which there are bosses and salaries⁷.

⁶ Young activists from the former DC are the most involved in their political relationships not merely for instrumental reasons: 31.5% of them find help in the political sphere for «affective», 29.6% for «ethical», and 22.2% for «work-related» problems.

Furthermore, those who provide one type of help are also those who are more likely to provide other types of help: that is, *sources of support overlap*. Although this is true among "ordinary" young people (33.5% of the network members who give some support give it on two or more types of problems), such a concentration is even greater among young political activists: 49.4% of their "supporters" are looked upon for more than one kind of help⁸.

"Supporters" are likely to form the inner core of the network - those who are most trusted and to whom respondents feel closest. Concentration of support in few individuals can be interpreted as a sort of strict policy in one's management of trust. As any politician, a participant observer noted (Bullitt 1977, 46), the young party activist must know many but have the confidence of few. The price to pay is stronger dependence on a handful of individuals within the network. In particular, these seem to be the senior leaders. In 71.2% of the cases, "political support" is provided by "superiors within the party". With this kind of helpers, moreover, agreement on moral (i.e., abortion) and political (i.e., voting) values is high (respectively

⁷ Activists who define themselves as "political professionals" amount to 7%, and 19.4% of national leaders.

⁸ This concentration takes place along two clear lines, "material" and "spiritual". In particular, among activists "political" and "economic" support tend to be provided by the same network members. Kendall's τ_{pb} is an appropriate measure for these 2x2 table associations (cf. Dickinson Gibbons 1993). Cross-tabulating affective and moral support in the professional context of the network, τ_{pb} is .38 for young nonactivists and .56 for activists. In the non-professional context, τ_{pb} is .42 and .46 respectively. τ_{pb} association between political and economic support in the professional context of activists is .30.

with 83% and 93.5% of them); other kinds of support are also provided by seniors in the majority of cases. Older individuals form 81% of those who give «political», 86% of those who give «economic», 85% of those who give «ethical», 79% of those who give «work-related», and even 74% of those who give «affective» support. Therefore, the activists' support network, which defines the circle of the most significant others in personal networks, is not composed of equals but rather of bosses and mentors. These network members are the same as those with whom young activists have sponsorship ties. Thus, *sponsorship ties are strong points of reference in the social world of the prospective politician both instrumentally and symbolically*, given the wide spectrum of material and emotional help they provide.

These quantitative findings capture the essence of the narrative of early political life in Italian parties given by the former youth party leaders who were interviewed:

«The new cadres of the party used to emerge in two ways. Either a young man decided to "play the porter" (*fare il portaborse*) to an adult leader, and then, with time, he took the place of this leader within the party, or he tried to find his role on the scene autonomously» (I.6, PSI leader).

«In many cases it goes like this: A boy follows a party leader from the beginning and becomes his representative within the youth organization. He fully supports the political line drawn by the leader. In practice, he is tied to him and he links his own political future to him. If unfortunately his "referent" is defeated in inner party competition and is relegated to the side-lines, or, even worse, dies, the young man's career is seriously compromised» (I.3, PPI leader).

3. The Volume of Social Capital

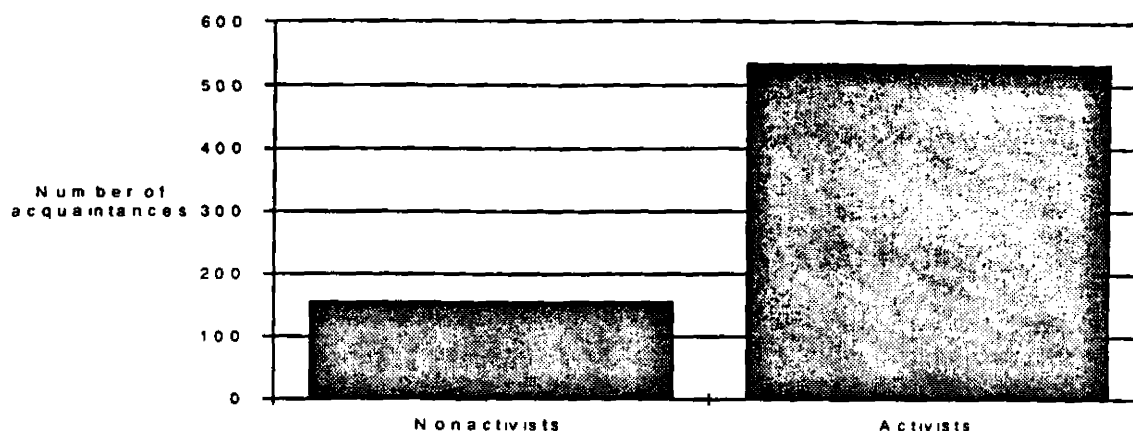
Size is a key dimension of social networks, the measurement of which is however problematic, depending on the type of ties considered (cf. Sudman 1985; Sudman 1988; Huang-Tausig 1990)⁹. Conceptually network size hinges on the boundary specification of the network - on how restrictive the criteria for inclusion are. In the context of this study, personal networks have been defined as the respondents' «significant others» (cf. appendix A, § 1)¹⁰. Yet, personal networks as defined above do not exhaust the acquaintances that form an individual's social capital. An estimate of the respondents' volume of social capital, including all those persons to whom they have access for political or other matters, was obtained by using the respondents' telephone lists¹¹.

⁹ Pioneer studies estimate that U.S. citizens know personally some 1,500 people on average (Freeman-Thompson 1989; Killworth et al. 1984; Killworth et al. 1990) and have some social exchange with 26 persons in 10 consecutive days (Milardo et al. 1983); meanwhile, intimate friends can usually be counted on the fingers of one hand.

¹⁰ Young activists have a slightly larger personal network in their professional context (on average 3.9 persons) than people of the same age in their work environment (3.7 persons), but a smaller network in other settings (3.7 vs. 4.2 persons). Globally personal networks consist of about eight persons in both samples. If the same person was named as part of either the professional and non-professional context of the network, that person was included only in the first context to avoid over-representation.

¹¹ Considering that the telephone is the «technology of sociability» (Fischer 1992, 266), an original indicator of the volume of social capital was used: the number of people under the D letter in the respondents' personal telephone list (for its validity, see Freeman-Thompson 1989). The number found was then multiplied by a factor corresponding to the share of surnames under that letter (1/32th of the total) in the national telephone directory of 1992. The D letter was chosen when preparing the questionnaire since it is not very common and yet not too rare. Counting names in the list was thus not troublesome during the interviews, while the risk of grossly underestimating those who do not know anybody with a surname beginning by D was minimized.

Figure 1: Volume of social capital of young political activists and nonactivists



The general hypothesis about associational participation that «people become more or less active depending on the number of social ties they have» (Janoski-Wilson 1995, 272) seems here to be fully confirmed. Indeed, the volume of the social capital controlled is one of the most striking differences between young political activists and non-active people of the same age: activists have access to three and a half times more people than nonactivists (534 against 155 persons on average) (figure 1)¹².

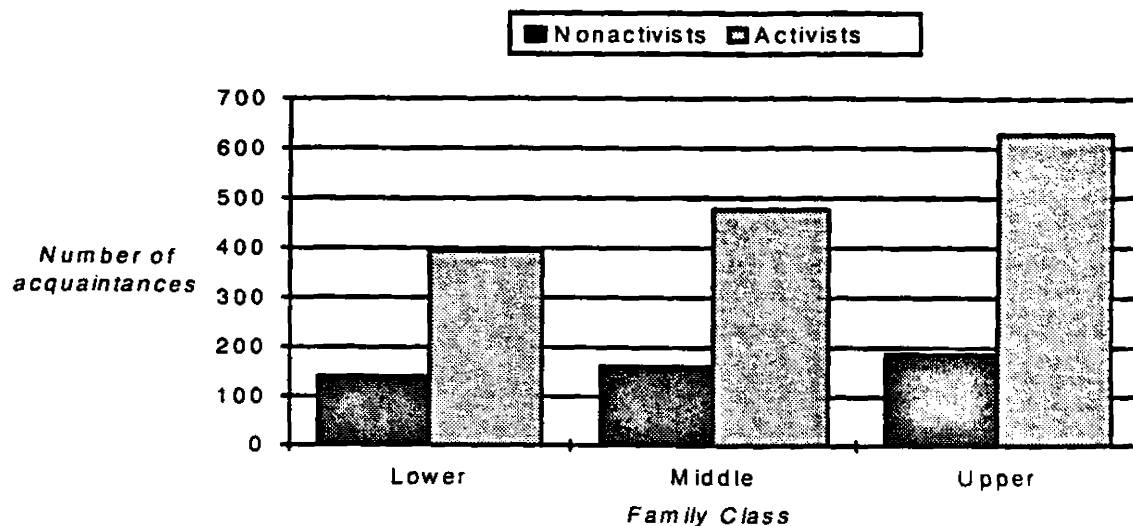
Clearly, what was obtained is only an estimate of the volume of individuals' social capital: nothing can be derived from this number about the resourcefulness and strength of the supporting ties (cf. chapter II, § 3.4). The indicator used is also imperfect for at least three reasons: a) because not everyone uses surnames in personal phone lists (some write first names instead), b) because these phone lists can include names of occasional acquaintances, and c) because some have more than one phone list (respondents could only refer to the one available to them when they were interviewed).

¹² Although the available evidence does not make it possible to find out how many of these people were known to the activists before entering politics, we argue that this was the case for the large majority of acquaintances. Firstly, because young activists have entered politics only two-three years earlier - too short a period to triplicate one's social capital. Secondly, because political involvement does not seem to yield a larger acquaintanceship: the correlation between years of party militancy and the volume of social capital is negative ($r = -.26$).

The build-up of social capital seems to be the first investment strategy of young would-be politicians. The typical concern of the political man «to be widely known and liked - in short, to be popular» (Dahl 1961, 248) requires such a capital. Moreover, acquaintances are likely to supply information which can be turned into opportunities. Indeed, greater political ambition hinges on a larger volume of social capital: 355 persons among grassroot militants, 541 among local leaders, and 678 among national leaders. Southern activists have more than double the number of acquaintances (841) than their Northern and Center counterparts. They appear to control patron-like networks - possibly inherited from mentors or relatives in politics. On the other hand, young leaders in the Lega Nord are the most "isolated", both as regards the size of their personal network (which globally includes one person less than on average: 6.6) and the volume of their social capital (429 persons). In describing their political experience, some reported that there was a stigma attached to them when they decided to join the League - usually in the 1980s, when the party was actually scorned by public opinion (the press and the more educated). Their current relative isolation is thus likely to stem from the initial «climate of suspicion and contempt», as one of the young activists of the League stated.

Other factors also seem to be at the origins of a larger social capital - in particular among activists. These factors are family socio-economic status and respondents' birth order.

Figure 2: The volume of social capital of young activists and nonactivists by family class^a



a This is a shortened version of the family class assignment introduced in chapter VI (§ 2); the upper class comprises the upper- and lower-upper, the middle class the upper- and lower-middle, the lower class the upper- and lower-lower classes

That social capital is linked to socio-economic status (figure 2) is in line with past research on personal networks (cf. van der Poel 1993a, 71-2). Such a link can be interpreted as being an element of «Bourdieu's key original insights [...] that there are immaterial forms of capital - cultural, symbolic, and social - as well as a material or economic form and that with varying levels of difficulty it is possible to convert one of these forms into another» (Calhoun 1993, 69). As Bourdieu (1994, 9; 1986, 242) wrote more recently, «grosso modo, capital goes to capital» in a process of «transubstantiation» of capital¹³.

¹³ After the pioneer studies on the «multiplying effect» of family social networks on other forms of capital among the French economic elite (Bourdieu-de Saint Martin 1978, 27-8), empirical research on status attainment has gathered substantial evidence on the causal

Finally, birth order affects the control of social capital in two ways: first-borns excel in the number of social relations they manage (608 persons for activists, 173 for "ordinary" persons), while only children are the most isolated (460 and 137 persons respectively). Perhaps older sons and daughters are advantaged in having easier access to relations mediated by parents, since the age distance between them and their elders' associates is not so high as to hinder mutual understanding. On the contrary, only children do not of course benefit from relations mediated by brothers and sisters: these handicaps may continue to have an effect in early adult years.

4. Conclusion: Social Capital and Youth Political Activism

Compared to individuals of their cohort who are not involved in politics, the leading activists of the Italian party youth organizations tend to have prior strong ties with senior political activists, either relatives or others, and a larger volume of social capital (i.e., of potentially accessible social relations).

According to a reviewed explanation (McAdam-Paulsen 1993), a prior relationship with an activist may not only give concrete opportunities to join a political organization, but also a role model stimulating involvement

importance of social capital (Lin et al. 1981a; Lin et al. 1981b; Campbell et al. 1986; De Graaf-Flap 1988; for a review, Flap 1991, 6185-7).

(cf. chapter II, § 3.4). Yet, why, among the many role models which the potential recruits can find around themselves, do they come to choose the political one? Why should the model embodied by a politicized relative or friend be more attractive than that offered by the politically apathetic significant others, who are usually more numerous?

The existence of a link between the characteristics of activists' networks just examined - political sponsorship ties and a large volume of social capital - can help to answer this question. It can also explain how young individuals who are about 25 years old can be acquainted with more than five hundred people.

The first point to consider is that to be associated with persons with greater resources is *coeteris paribus* more rewarding than to be associated with persons with lesser resources (cf. Lin 1982, 133). Whoever is on close terms with a resourceful person somehow enjoys this person's resources as well, *whatever form these resources take*. Thus, someone who has a strong tie with a person controlling a large and valuable social capital receives current or future benefits from it. Social and economic capital "spread" around their main holders in everyday life. This "halo fallout" from individual wealth, in any form of resource, makes those role models that are sustained by associates with more resources more attractive.

Adult politicians tend to have more resources than the man in the street, and especially *more social capital*. Substantial evidence on this point is given by the elite

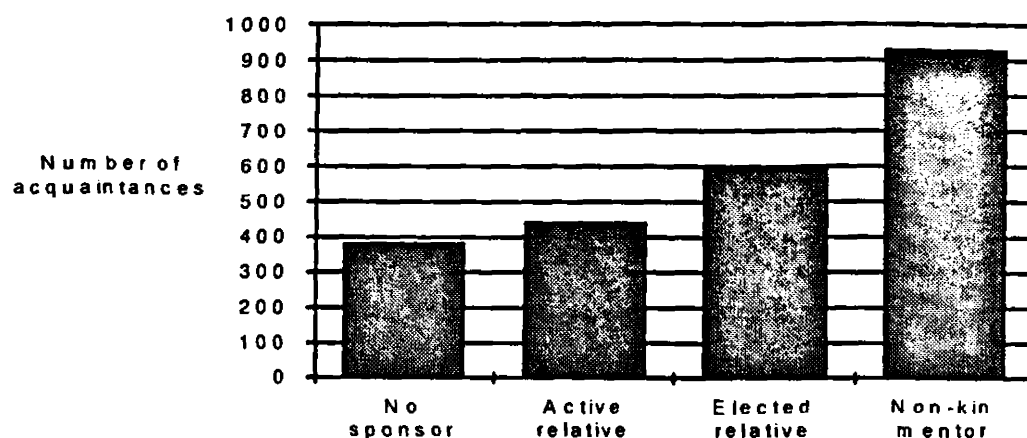
integration literature (e.g., Aberbach et al. 1981, 209 ff.; Higley-Moore 1981; Higley et al. 1991), and that on the citizens-representatives relations (Sharp 1982; Zuckerman-West 1985; Komito 1992)¹⁴. In Italy, to get back to our case study, even low-level local politicians have some acquaintance with a broad range of higher-level leaders and with more than 700 voters (Recchi 1991).

A general conclusion follows from these premises. Young individuals are likely to strengthen their ties with their most resourceful elders (relatives, friends, friends of relatives), regardless of the kind of capital these elders control and of their activity. When these elders are politicians, the young will be likely to come closer to them, to adopt their occupational role as a model, and to obtain some of their most typical resource: their social connections. The relationship with one or more sponsors will transfer onto the young recruit some of the sponsors' social capital¹⁵. In particular, the transfer of the volume of social capital is relatively easy. Moreover, this transfer does not mean that the original holder loses the control of the capital, as would be the case for economic capital.

¹⁴ There is also evidence that to participate significantly above average is associated with possessing a larger social capital (Verba 1987, 64-5; Parry et al. 1992, 86 ff.).

¹⁵ Perhaps personal dispositions come into play at this point. They can help in a possible competition among siblings for being sponsored by those common relatives or friends who are most resourceful.

Figure 4: Young political activists' volume of social capital by type of sponsor^a



^a A non-kin mentor is held to be the activist's sponsor when in the activist's network there is at least one political fellow of higher rank, older and known before entering politics, and there is no political activist in the family

According to this explanation, the origins of the activist's social capital are primarily found in his political sponsor - a politically active relative or a senior non-kin mentor. The mentor, seemingly, adopts the younger politician and introduces him to his own acquaintances even more than an elected relative can do: young activists with a mentor enjoy a greater volume of social capital (figure 4).

Generally speaking, sponsors and mentors are likely to provide their protégés with far more social capital than introductory organizational ties. Open-ended interviews with the former leaders of the party youth organizations contain revealing passages in this regard:

«In my time, many [activists in the youth party] were "adopted", let's say, by a leader. From this point of view, choosing a powerful "referent" in the adult party was important. [...] I had almost a family relationship with X [a PSI leader], since I was a desk companion of his son at school» (I.6, PSI leader).

«Ugo La Malfa [PRI's founder and first leader] was a close friend of my father, he used to come to our house often. Ferruccio Parri [first Premier of Italy after World War II] was very much a friend of my father too. [...] Parri and La Malfa were the two people who, concretely, worked as models in my training» (I.1, PRI leader).

«My father was an MP. He was in politics from the antifascist war onwards. My brother was in politics too. He was a member of the Sicilian regional council. I became a candidate for the Chamber after a tragic event: the Mafia murder of my brother. [...] I wanted to avoid the dispersion of the group of young people that gathered and formed around him» (I.3, PPI leader).

«A person who taught me a lot, especially as regards politics but not only, was Y [a communist politician], who later became mayor of Rome» (I.8, PDS leader).

«My father, you know, was a "rising star" in the DC when he died. I was a child. Some of his friends always remained with me, even more so when I entered politics» (I.10, PPI leader).

«Let's say that I "flirted" with many true masters: Ernesto Rossi, Altiero Spinelli, Niccolò Carandini, Mario Ferrara. I spent a lot of time with them. I say I "flirted" because I was adopted intellectually by each of them in different periods. So, it happened that I left one for the other, just as when you leave a woman because you fall in love with another» (I.5, Radical Party leader).

«There was a person who influenced me enormously. [...] He was president of the ACLI [a large catholic organization]. A wonderful teacher, one of those figures that you probably don't find around anymore. He put me at the head of the study office in the ACLI. [...] He made me start, I owe him a lot. I believe that I am a lucky guy, because I had such a teacher. Few people happen to meet a person like this. It is an accident of life. Finding a teacher is important and rare» (I.7, PPI leader).

In the light of this new perspective on the supply side of political recruitment, cooption has to be viewed in the context of a more general process of capital transmission. It is interesting to note that this process parallels the process by which someone may become an entrepreneur:

«British data support the hypothesis - recently examined by U.S. economists - that entrepreneurs face capital and liquidity constraints. It appears that the effect is large. [But] a gift or inheritance of £5,000 approximately doubles a typical individual's probability of setting up his or her own business. [...] The probability peaks at approximately £14,000» (Blanchflower-Oswald 1990, 20).

Initiating an economic and initiating a political activity at a young age are strikingly similar. «Capital constraints» have also to be faced when taking a political career. In principle, you can promote yourself impersonally - going to a party and asking for a position. Yet, this is as absurd as going to a bank and asking for a loan without any guarantee. In both cases, an «original accumulation» is needed to start a new business. The only difference is the form of capital which is essential. A bequest of economic capital makes a young entrepreneur, a special dowry of social capital is what makes a young prospective politician¹⁶.

¹⁶ These various forms of capital can be used in more than one domain. On the one hand, would-be entrepreneurs can manage to develop their business relying fundamentally on a high amount of social capital - e.g., for credit, information on opportunities, counselling. On the other hand, newcomers on the political market can profit from being economically more affluent than their adversaries (Berlusconi's case in Italy in 1994 is the most sensational example).

The case for socio-structural explanations of career choices is thus strong. Empirical attempts to account for the emergence of both economic entrepreneurship and political activism mainly through personality-based approaches have failed (cf. Aldrich-Zimmer 1986, 4-7; McAdam-Paulsen 1993, 642-3). The location of actors in the social structure, conceived as the space of the positions of control of social resources, seems to affect career commitments more fundamentally.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF POLITICAL AMBITION:

TOWARDS A GENERAL MODEL

1. The Roots of Political Ambition: Five Competing Models and Their Champions

In the mid-1960s an assessment of the literature on elite recruitment rethorically asked: «Do individuals marked for an adult political career experience initial political socialization in a manner which increases the probability that they will select themselves or be selected for political leadership?» (Prewitt 1965, 97). At the time, there seemed to be no good answer to this question. By the mid-1970s a critical review of the growing body of studies on ambition observed that «the most fruitful line of inquiry has addressed the social influence of significant others, but even here the interpretations of how these others mold and foster "ambition" are not firmly established» (Spenner-Featherman 1978, 409). Some ten years later, a large panel study on young ambitious people concluded that the «lack of resources and of peers and relatives with similar experiences persist as handicaps» in cultivating higher ambitions as an adolescent and then in fulfilling them as a young adult (McClelland 1990, 226-7).

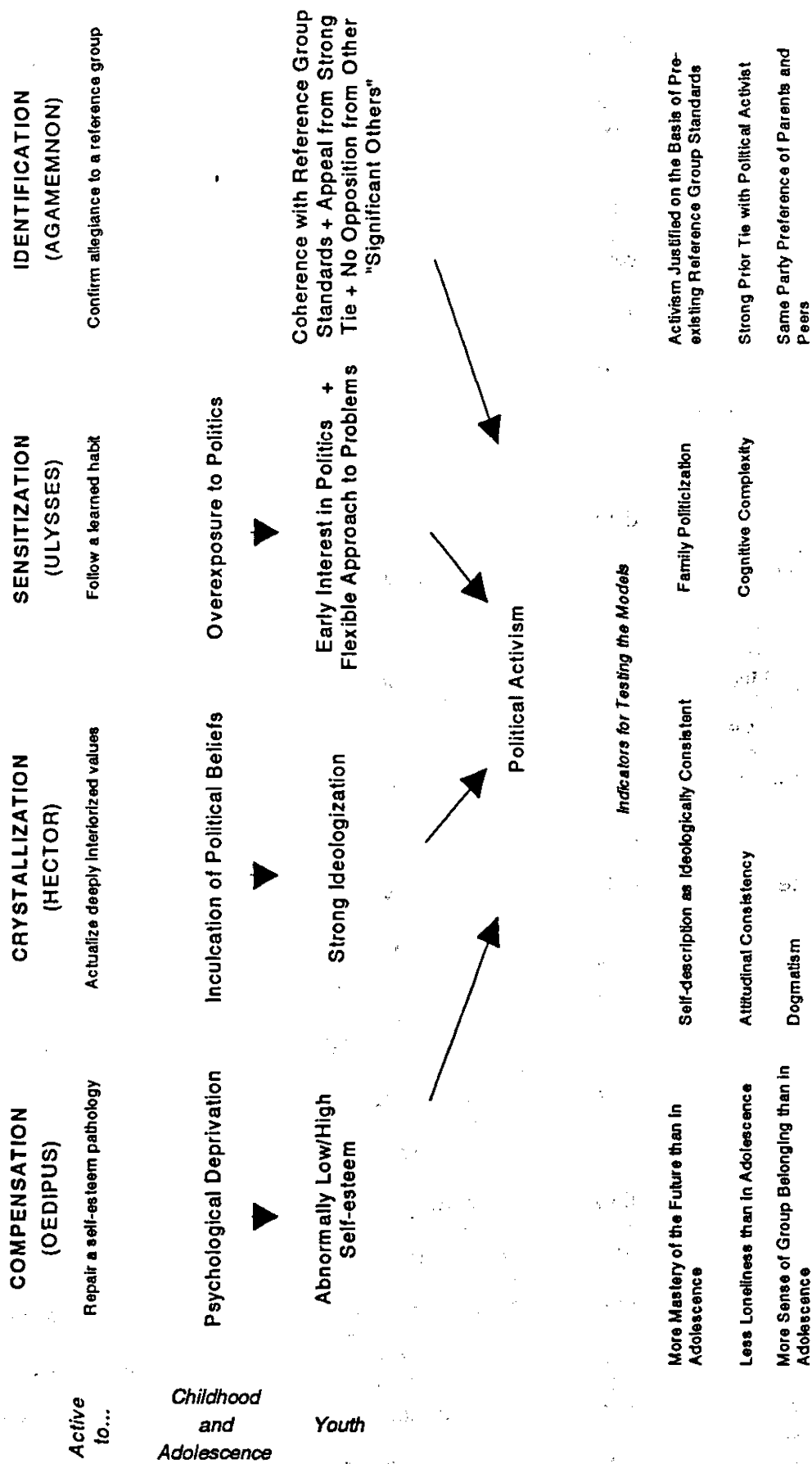
These quotations suggest some moderate optimism about the long-term outcomes in this research area, as there has been a progressive qualification of the original question

about the roots of individual ambitions. In the last three decades, a common focus has at least been established. Yet, the picture remains quite obscure. The processes by which the apparently crucial factor - the "significant others" - enter the "ambition equation" are still accounted for in many different ways.

Fundamentally, accounts diverge on what is deemed to be really "significant" in the "significant others", namely their role either as *symbolic definers* of the differential chances for individual success or as *structural bridges* for the control of social resources. An effort is made here to reconcile these approaches.

Existing theories about the sources of political ambition have been treated extensively in chapter II (§ 3). We can now reconsider and evaluate them in the light of the available evidence. Four (more or less explicitly stated) basic models can be identified in the literature. A synoptic view of these competing (although only in part mutually exclusive) models is provided in figure 1, which also contains a brief reference to the indicators which have been used for testing them in this inquiry. The models will be called after four legendary heroes of Greek mythology: Oedipus, Hector, Ulysses, and Agamemnon. These heroes represent the "champions" of each theory. The conditions that made these heroes reach their leadership status seem to fit the different explanations of the emergence of political man. Their stories are used here as metaphors - that is, as the myths underlying the existing accounts of political activation.

Figure 1: The roots of youth political activism: models derived from existing theories



These four models are contrasted with a fifth which attempts to address some unresolved questions as well as to incorporate the narrative and evidence illustrated in the previous chapter. The champion of this model is not a legendary but a historical character of antiquity: Octavius, who took the name of Augustus as the first Roman emperor.

After reviewing the competing explanations (§ 1.1 to 1.5), their validity in the context of this study will be tested statistically (§ 2). The broader implications of the preferred model will then be discussed (§ 3).

1.1. *The Compensation Model: Oedipus*

Political psychologists tend to posit that the ultimate roots of the political personality are in the afflictions of the family situation during childhood. In the words of Lasswell (1950, 17), «the true politician learns to use the world of public objects as a means of alleviating the stresses of his intimate environment. Cravings for deference, frustrated or overindulged in the intimate circle, find expression in the secondary environment». In particular, repression as a child caused by the father's figure is held responsible for a lifelong low self-esteem. Although other antecedents have to occur for one to enter politics, a particularly low self-esteem is the necessary precondition. The political personality pursues power to fulfill the need to compensate for an originally deprived self-image. Thereafter, this will be called the *Compensation*

model of political activation¹. Its champion is Oedipus, the mythical character which - through Freud's reading - lies at the heart of Lasswell's theory of the political personality².

After Freud other psychoanalytical schools have proposed differing interpretations of the tragedy. Fromm's image of Oedipus, more than Freud's, fits with Lasswell's account of the political personality. His conception of the myth substantially disregards the element of incest and emphasizes the son's unconscious hostility to his father deriving from his painful situation as a rejected child (Delcourt 1981). Hostility unchains ambition for power, that is the desire to overthrow the father's authority and thus become the «conqueror of the earth» (in ancient Greece, the mother was a symbol of the earth).

¹ A variant of this, known as the «Actualization Model» (Carlson-Hyde 1980), originates from Barber's (1965) remark that a particularly high self-esteem is equally conducive to politics, since this personality trait smooths the difficulties usually perceived as elements of the political game. In a sense, according to this theory, high self-esteem makes politics appear an easier enterprise than it seems normally.

² Even though scrupulous in all of his references, Freud deals with the original myth of Oedipus freely enough: «It seems evident the distance between the text of the tragedy and the reading of it by Freud [...]; it seems evident also the distance between Oedipus and the complex with his name as enunciated by his finder (or inventor?)» (Montanaro-Tsamopoulos 1988, 23). In fact, ambition is a central facet of the original character. Accounting for the near-ubiquity of the myth in different European cultures and for its roots in the prehistorical process of power transmission from father to son before the elder's death, Propp (1975, 116) notes that in all the older variants of the legend the young Oedipus is always characterized as «ambitious».

1.2. *The Crystallization Model: Hector*

Although seldom given a full-blown theoretical status, the image of the political activist as "true believer" is quite common in the literature. In this model the family also induces ambition. Reference is made to a family context marked by a strong attachment to values, discipline, or even the inculcation of moral principles. Politics turns out to be the offspring's destiny, since it opens up the route to adapt the world to received and highly-revered standards. When such standards coincide with those of a party, the latter will form the context of political activation. This will be called the *Crystallization model*.

Hector, the Trojan hero, is its champion. He is the heir and the leader of his father's army. His leadership derives as much from an exceptional allegiance to the core of the values of his city as from his origins. Trained as the future head of his people, Hector is completely dominated by duty. He embodies the spirit of his people in its purest form. This makes him ignore any appeal to private feelings, like when his wife and family seek to discourage him from the fatal duel with Achilles. A win or die logic underlies his commitment to political and military action³.

³ Reference is limited to Homer's character. Hector is rather different in modern dramas, such as Jean Giradoux's *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*.

1.3. *The Sensitization Model: Ulysses*

Without dismissing the family role in promoting the political activation of the young, the *Sensitization model* plays down its capacity to determine the value patterns of the new generations. Political scientists (such as Prewitt and Putnam) and sociologists (such as Merelman) who have independently proposed this explanation begin with the assumption that socialization does not crystallize attitudes and beliefs. Yet it does restrict the intellectual interests of the young and transmits to him the adequate capacities to satisfy such interests. Because of these mechanisms, family politicization serves primarily to make political activism an option for the youth as he asks himself what he is to do in life. In addition, «it produces a particularly open and flexible political learning style» (Merelman-King 1986, 476). Parents and other important figures train those cognitive capacities which seem typical of politicians - not just some minimum competence, but also the awareness of the complexity of public problems.

Ulysses' story and character illustrate this pattern of socialization and entry into political activity. Ulysses was not only a king's son, but he descended from a god: on his father's side his great-grand father was Zeus himself, and on his mother's side Hermes. He therefore received an elite-level education. In his youth «he travelled much. A late tradition wants him to have been a student of the Centaure Chiron, like Achilles» (Grimal 1979, 469). As an adult, he always maintains a superior autonomy of judgment. All his

acts demonstrate that he bases his leadership on an uniquely keen and flexible spirit. As the Sensitization model claims, Ulysses has family roots which lead him to be overexposed and almost unavoidably pushed toward political leadership, while also giving him the chance to develop the personality traits particularly suited to such a leadership.

1.4. *The Identification Model: Agamemnon*

Family members are considered as merely a segment of the circle of significant others who affect the decision to become active in the *Identification model*. The model is more detailed than the previous ones, even though it does not specify the timing of the process leading to the full and sometime risky commitment⁴. Fundamentally, it attempts to give a socio-psychological explanation to the presence, which is frequently found, of an already involved friend or kin in the personal network of those who are recruited. The basic tenet of the theory is that «it is the centrality and importance of our relationships with others that serve to establish and sustain the salience of various identities» (McAdam-Paulsen 1993, 647). A prior strong tie with somebody who is active stimulates or (more often) reinforces the adhesion to a reference group. The strong tie appears to have a twofold impact. On the one hand, it recalls one's attachment to a «salient identity» (or role model) as

⁴ The model derives from McAdam's (1988) study of a high-risk form of activism: the Freedom Summer Movement for the advancements of civil rights in Mississippi in 1964. However, it may constitute a more general model of self-recruitment to public activities and positions.

promoted by a reference group. On the other, it communicates the possibility to act coherently with that model by joining a concrete group. One becomes active in the absence of opposition from other significant others.

Seemingly, the epic hero who experiences such a process of activation is Agamemnon, «the king par excellence in the Iliad, as commander in chief of the Greek army» (Grimal 1979, 19). The preconditions of activism in the Identification model - strong ties with persons who have been active earlier, adhesion to a reference group, no opposition from other significant others - are met in Agamemnon's mobilization for the Trojan war. Firstly, he has a strong tie with Menelaus, the offended husband of Helen, who is his brother. Secondly, Agamemnon is moved by group loyalty. He has sworn a pact of solidarity with all the other pretenders to Helen's hand. Not only would they not have opposed the man chosen by Helen, but they would also have helped each other had one of them been attacked. Third, in taking his decision Agamemnon finds no resistance in his family as other Greek heroes do⁵.

⁵ His wife, Clytemnestra, does nothing to keep him home - for many reasons. On the one hand, the expedition is designed (at least in principle) to rescue Helen, Clytemnestra's sister. On the other, Clytemnestra's affection for Agamemnon is dubious. She had been kidnapped by her current husband from Tantalus, who Agamemnon had killed. Moreover, Agamemnon had sacrificed his wife's daughter Iphigenia to the gods. Finally, that Clytemnestra is not exactly desperate for Agamemnon's engagement in the expedition is proved by her love-affair with Aegisthus during her husband's absence - a love that will lead her to kill Agamemnon when he comes back.

1.5. The Rational Identification Model: Octavius

In proposing a fifth account of the process of political activation, an attempt is made to integrate the Sensitization and Identification models and solve a basic problem inherent in them, namely why the political identity is chosen by the young would-be politician as most salient. The Sensitization model answers "routine"; the Identification model indicates "reference groups". These explanations are unsatisfactory. On the one hand, why does not every offspring in politicized families become politically active? Routine is an insufficiently discriminating explanation. On the other, why do future activists choose some reference groups instead of others? The Identification model merely shifts the problem one step backwards.

As a theoretical starting point, the *Rational Identification model* assumes that individuals adopt identities that are compatible with the maximization of their future status⁶. Family and milieu politicization are maintained as fundamental factors in producing future activists. Yet, the model sets aside psychological processes of norm and value transmission. Without denying that these

⁶ Structural sociology, «with its emphasis on the constraints and opportunities that influence behavior» (Mizuchi 1994, 335), is the underlying framework of the model. Although it may be close to rational choice theory in its implicit rationality premise (individuals seek to control as much capital as they can), it does not assume «exogenously formed preferences»; rather, it tries to explain how these preferences are formed (that is, the constraints and opportunities which lead to a particular action).

processes take place, it is doubtful that they follow a stable pattern. The stress is placed rather on the presence of a typical configuration of opportunities as the crucial antecedent of youth commitment. Families intervene as "bridges" of social mobility, passing on to their children «concrete resources [...], especially the key resources of insider's information about the rules of the game and interpersonal connection» (Bertaux 1995, 72). In our particular case, if the «family has friends or relatives among politicians, there will be an added incentive to enter politics and entrance in the job will be facilitated» (Blondel 1965, 132). More precisely, the theoretical path explaining the emergence of youth political ambition (and why this is limited to a tiny minority of any new cohort) can be summarized in three steps (figure 2).

Firstly, the young man must have a prior tie with a political activist - a family member or somebody known through family ties. In early adulthood, when individuals are socially expected to find a career, the young must regard this social relation as the greatest potential for his future (step # 1 in the figure). The prospect of entering politics due to this tie must be assigned a higher return than those provided by educational achievements and ascriptive occupational opportunities together⁷.

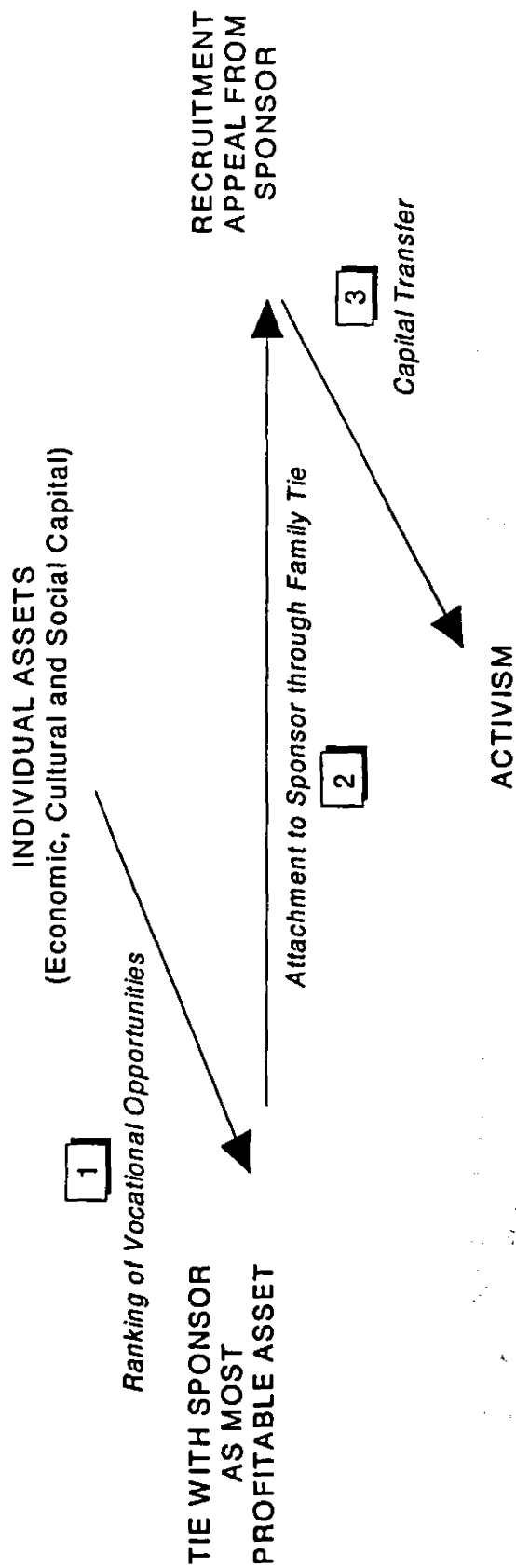
⁷ Particularly favourable is an incomplete control on the main resources of social mobility: young actors completely lacking these resources do not dare to aspire to public offices, while those who possess both (i.e., acquired credentials and ascribed professional chances) do not need to look for an alternative career line (as the political one).

When these initial conditions are met, the prospective politician comes to see the activist identity embodied by the potential sponsor as the one most convenient for himself (step # 2). This is not sufficient, however. As the young man approaches politics, the relationship with the senior activist must take on a sponsorship nature. This is revealed by the transmission of some "capital of departure" onto the recruit (step # 3)⁸.

In this way, the model can claim general validity. What may vary mostly from one context to another is the nature of the "capital of departure" which is crucial in the recruitment process. This depends on the culture prevailing in the specific political system, as this culture defines the forms of capital most valuable politically. In Italy, at the time of the study, it was social capital; elsewhere it may be cultural or economic capital.

⁸ In more general terms, the model posits that individuals' assessment of ends is fundamentally rational, but also that this assessment brings about the taking of a new identity, which makes the ends become a matter of passion rather than interest. Thus, the emergence of ambition is regarded as a process in which culture and structure interplay: identification parallels resource transmission.

Figure 2: The making of political ambition according to the Rational Identification model



Indicators

- 1 = Low educational credentials (cultural capital) or low family control on work opportunities (economic capital)
+ Political activism of kin (social capital)
- 2 = Presence of senior and previously known politician in personal network
- 3 = High volume of social capital

The "champion" of this model of political activation is Caius Octavius, alias Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome. His story is worth recalling briefly⁹.

The concern for posterity through descendance was highly felt in the Latin world. It was very probably also shared by Julius Caesar, who had no direct descendants¹⁰. At the apex of his glory (45 b.C.), he made the Roman Senate vote a provision that allowed for the transmission of the prestigious office of *pontifex* to his adopted son, whoever he should be. Immediately afterwards he made his last will, which remained secret until his death. Caesar's heir and adopted son was to be his sister's grandson, Octavius. Roman historians magnify this choice as a sign of the dictator's farsightedness, or stigmatize it as a «whim» (Ferrero 1925, 29). Indeed Caesar had two more nephews, Quintus Pedius and Lucius Pinarius¹¹. The young Octavius (he was only 18 at the death of Caesar) seemed of delicate health to his contemporaries, whilst Pedius was described as a «*fortis vir*» by Cicero in 54 b.C. Moreover, Octavius had very little military and political experience as compared to Pedius',

⁹ The main sources used about Octavius' life and personality are Jones (1970) and Parain (1978).

¹⁰ Roman *paterfamilias* aimed at a delicate balance between having too many heirs (who would have dispersed the deceased's estate) and none. As a consequence, the average number of male sons for senators at 55 (the age at which Caesar wrote his testament) was 0.8 (Saller 1994, 57). Therefore Caesar's case - he had had only one daughter who died in child-birth in 55 b.C. - was probably not too exceptional.

¹¹ Despite Suetonius' reference in his *Lives of the Caesars* (83, 2) to Octavius, Pinarius, and Pedius as «*sororum nepotes*», several clues lead modern historians to suspect that the latter two were Caesar's direct nephews (Wissowa-Kroll 1937, 19.1, 38-40).

who had fought on Caesar's side many times, had taken part in a triumph, and had been an incumbent of several civil offices. Was Octavius chosen because he was more courageous, brilliant, or ambitious than his cousins?

Probably not. Caesar did not even have the chance to test Octavius' military value, given that the young man was shipwrecked off Spain and joined his granduncle's army only at the end of the campaign of 45 b.C. Moreover historians and biographers agree that the future emperor was not a particularly talented general.

So, why Octavius? Explanations based on character have no grounds other than fantasy. On the contrary, the structure of Caesar's family is an established fact. This structure constrained the dictator's choice. When he wrote his testament, Octavius was 18, Pinarius about 30, and Pedius 43. At that time Caesar was 55 years old. He was in good health. He was not expected to abandon power soon. In demographic terms, as a Roman high-status citizen his life expectancy was about 15 years¹². Octavius was nothing more and nothing less than the heir with the right age. Although equally valid, his cousins were too old. By appointing Octavius, Caesar intended to extend as much as he could his own control on the future of Rome. In contrast to his cousins, he could still be moulded at his granduncle's pleasure¹³.

¹² The difficulties of modelling life tables in ancient Rome are reviewed in Saller (1994, 12-25).

¹³ As Caesar was reported to cry in front of the statue of Alexander the Great in Gades at 32, for the Greek leader ruled the world at the same

Of course, Octavius was not an outsider. His father, who had been praetor and governor of the province of Macedonia, died just before a probable election to the consulate. But the young man had not even had the time to show special qualities or motivations. Thus the opening of Caesar's will created an «unexpected situation [that] imposed new duties and *stimulated new ambitions*» in this 18 year old man (Hammond-Scullard 1970, 149; italics added). Caesar's will made him not only the adopted son of the dictator (whose name he took), but also the chief heir of his wealth. The symbolic legacy granted him the loyalty of Caesar's soldiers, and the material bequest put an extraordinary capital for political uses at his disposal¹⁴.

Young Octavius' ambition, in sum, arises when the conditions of the Rational Identification model are met in sequence. Firstly, the family milieu gives him the chance to associate with a political leader. Secondly, in terms of age he fits with this leader's will to perpetuate himself. This determines his ranking of future opportunities and, consequently, his taking of a new identity (witness the adoption of Caesar's name). Finally, he receives the mentor's symbolic and material wealth. This inheritance is

age, one may speculate that the dictator planned to have a heir as powerful as Alexander the Great when in his early thirties.

¹⁴ The beginning of Augustus' autobiography (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*) recognizes that this capital was decisive for his precocious and successful entrance into politics: «When 19 years old, I formed an army on my own decision and at *my own expense*» (italics added). How important this capital proved to be is witnessed by the rest of the *Res Gestae*, which consists above all of a scrupulous account of the future emperor's prodigality with soldiers and citizens.

the precipitating factor for the political activation of the man who will be the first Roman emperor.

2. *Testing the Models*

Which of the reviewed models better accounts for the process of political activation among contemporary youth? Two separate tests will be conducted in this section with different empirical datasets and theoretical scope. Firstly, the case-control study on the activists of the Italian party youth organizations - specifically designed to test these models - will show that the emergence of political ambition (i.e., being a youth party officer) follows the lines of the Rational Identification model. However, the developmental nature of the process cannot be fully accounted on the basis of this dataset. Moreover, the relatively small size and geographical concentration of the control sample inhibits making wide generalizations from the empirical findings (cf. chapter IV, § 2).

These two problems tend to be cancelled out with the second and complementary analysis, based on the «Survey on Social Mobility and Education in Italy»¹⁵. This survey recorded on the one hand whether respondents were party members and their interest for political activity, and on the other hand some indicators of the Rational

¹⁵ The survey was carried out in 1985 by a team formed by M. Barbagli, V. Capecchi, A. Cobalti, A. De Lillo, and A. Schizzerotto. The national sample comprises 5,016 cases. I thank the research team for making this dataset available to me. The following analysis is limited to the 1,670 cases in the 18-30 year age limits.

Identification model. In the explanation of the grass-root party militancy of young people, the model will perform as expected.

2.1. *The Five Models Contrasted*

A full comparative test of the contending models is run by using logistic regression with the original case-control dataset. The binary dependent variable in the analysis is political activism (coded "1" for young activists, "0" for young nonactivists). In addition to the five models introduced and discussed earlier, personal and family attributes representing various aspects of "social centrality" (gender, occupation, parental class and education, urban residence) are taken as forming a baseline model¹⁶. These dimensions of inequalities define what has been called a «standard theory of political participation» (Sciolla-Ricolfi 1989, 139-40) against which the more specific models accounting for political activism must be contrasted¹⁷.

In the Compensation model, youth political activism is aimed at overcoming weaknesses that emerged earlier in life. In particular, the political activist is expected to feel empowered and encapsulated in a group more so than when he was at a younger age. Three dummy variables were designed to

¹⁶ Bivariate analysis of the impact of all the independent variables has been carried out in the previous chapters (V, VI, and VII). A more precise description of these variables is in appendix B.

¹⁷ The original formulations of this theory date back to Lane (1959, 195-7) and Milbrath-Goel (1977, 87 ff.). Empirical validations are extremely numerous; in Italy, see Barbagli-Maccelli (1985).

record these crucial changes in the conception of Self with respect to adolescence, namely a stronger sense of personal control, sociability, and group belonging.

The Crystallization model postulates that young individuals become politically active because they seek to act according to their well-structured principles and to reinforce their adhesion to an ideology. In so doing, incipient party politicians are expected to be more dogmatic and ideologically consistent than their age peers. Three variables are therefore included in the model: the presence of a higher sense of ideological consistency than in adolescence (binary), the Dogmatism index score, and the Attitudinal Consistency index score.

The Sensitization model maintains that activism stems from a family tradition of political involvement, particularly because this moulds a specific cognitive complexity which is deemed typical of the political personality. The existence of kin actively engaged in politics takes account of the structural premises of the model; the respondent's score on a Complexity index¹⁸ is meant to capture the effect of these premises on his character.

In the Identification model, attention is mostly paid to the existence of a reference group that works as a <recruitment context>¹⁹. The support of the family and peers

¹⁸ This is a simpler version of the Complexity index discussed in chapter V, based only on the tendency to choose polarized scores in response to the opinion items of the questionnaire. This version of the index was preferred in order to minimize missing data.

¹⁹ This is operationalized by recording the long-standing commitment of

are additional factors facilitating activism; they are operationalized as the number of family members and long-standing friends, known at least since the age of 16, supporting the same party as respondents.

Finally, the process of activation in the Rational Identification model comprises three stages. In the first stage, the young individual evaluates the available assets for choosing a career. The existence of a politically active kin is a crucial inducement when it is accompanied by an incomplete control of the main resources of social mobility (either because of an educational deficit²⁰ or the lack of an inheritable family work²¹). In the second stage, family ties introduce the incipient activist into politics and to the future mentor, if he is not a relative. In the third stage, the direct relationship with a senior politician is assumed to lead to full-time political activism as it implies the transfer of some "capital of departure" for political work, that is to say, in the context of this study, social capital, and in particular its volume.

the respondent to an association or structured group activity with a strong cultural identity (e.g., parishes, *misericordie*, *case del popolo*, environmental organizations).

²⁰ Not only the end of *curricula* at high school, but also the inability to complete a university course before the age of 25 is taken as an indicator of low educational success.

²¹ Parents' control on the work opportunities of their offsprings is a difficult condition to gauge. However, it is likely to depend mainly on parents' occupations. Young people whose fathers are entrepreneurs or self-employed have a greater chance of following in their fathers' footsteps (for Italian evidence, Cobalti-Schizzerotto 1994). Hence, respondents were considered to lack an inheritable job when their fathers and/or mothers were not entrepreneurs or self-employed.

Table 1: Logistic regression models accounting for youth activism in Italian parties

	MODELS											
	Baseline		Compensation		Crystallization		Sensitization		Identification		Rational Identification	
	(b)	SE (b)	(b)	SE (b)	(b)	SE (b)	(b)	SE (b)	(b)	SE (b)	(b)	SE (b)
Independent variables												
Gender = male	.848**	.143	.850**	.153	.903**	.157	.873**	.219	.928**	.234	.888*	.320
Occupation = having a job	.057	.138	.095	.149	.185	.154	.122	.214	.108	.225	.103	.319
Family Class = I-II	1.096**	.220	1.340**	.253	1.355**	.258	.995*	.343	.916*	.349	.948	.554
Family Class = III	.722**	.157	.837**	.173	.831**	.175	.537	.235	.505	.243	.591	.388
Father's Education = university degree	-.003	.215	.079	.238	.121	.239	.219	.341	.170	.371	.084	.603
Mother's Education = university degree	-.101	.205	-.038	.213	-.059	.215	-.140	.305	-.180	.338	1.275	.621
Place of Residence = city	.097	.136	.059	.145	.012	.148	.063	.202	.083	.218	.269	.323
Change in Sense of Personal Control = more than in adolescence			-.367	.184	-.352	.187	-.046	.224	-.081	.232	-.164	.322
Change in Sense of Group Belonging = more than in adolescence			.801**	.142	.889**	.149	.937**	.201	.970**	.215	.814	.300
Change in Sense of Sociability = more than in adolescence			-.180	.138	-.178	.140	-.078	.192	-.153	.203	-.337	.302
Change in Sense of Consistency = more than in adolescence					-.222	.144	-.201	.198	-.241	.210	-.187	.311
Dogmatism					-.224	.145	-.035	.208	.008	.218	.319	.302
Attitudinal Consistency					.194	.136	.227	.194	.251	.210	.173	.307
Politically Active Kin							2.156**	.264	2.085**	.272	2.265**	.377
Complexity							-.099	.199	-.148	.215	-.068	.299
Availability of Reference Group									-.377	.423	-.172	.593
Political Agreement with Long-standing Friends									1.134	.579	.421	.777
Political Agreement with Family Members									1.413*	.561	1.397	.818
Incomplete Control of Resources of Social Mobility											.805*	.335
Prior Availability of Potential Political Sponsor											1.996**	.508
Volume of Social Capital											.223**	.050
Constant	-2.93	.208	-.268	.248	-.270	.249	.742	.371	1.090	.719	-4.668**	1.321
N	437		433		431		423		423		392	

* p < .01 ; ** p < .001

The results of the logistic regressions show that the Rational Identification model performs much better than the others (table 1). Having a "kin in active politics", a "poor educational curriculum" or no "family-controlled opportunity of work", at least one "prior tie with a senior politician" (i.e., a potential political sponsor), and a large "volume of social capital" rule out the effects of all the alternative explanatory variables of youth activism (except gender, as we shall shortly see).

None of the other hypotheses survives the test. Yet sociological theories of youth activism are more sustained than psychological ones. The baseline hypothesis, which describes political ambition as a derivative of social and especially class inequalities, cannot be abandoned on the basis of psychological characteristics alone. Among these, only an "increased sense of belonging" proves to distinguish significantly the two groups of respondents, unless Rational Identification variables are introduced.

The parameters of the regression equation suggest three remarks about the preferred model. Firstly, the coefficient of the variable "incomplete control of the main resources of social mobility" is significant at the .01 level "only". This probably results from a relatively poor operationalization of the concept. Yet, the coefficient is positive and significant up to a point. Second, outliers²² among activists are almost exclusively sub-leaders (10 out

²² These are the misclassified cases when the model is used for classification with the routine of the SPSS logistic regression module.

of 11). Thus, the model seems to fit the recruitment pattern of the leaders in the party youth organizations particularly well. The greater the ambition to embark upon a political career, the better the model works.

Finally, and most importantly, the Rational Identification model does not seem to exclude an independent effect of gender on youth activism. Young women remain alien from active politics not only because they lack the resources and conditions that lead to activism, but also *because they are women*. Thus, little credit must be given, in this case, to theories imputing women's underrepresentation in politics to just their underrepresentation among the categories of people from which the majority of politicians are initially drawn (e.g., Darcy et al. 1987, 96). Unfortunately data do not allow us to unravel the puzzle of the extent to which women's exclusion is due to supply- or demand-side factors: more complex and not yet developed models of women's political ambition are needed. They should take into account the interplay of gender-specific socialization patterns, informal sanctioning and rewarding within parties, and feedback effects of these practices on women's career expectations. Only *ad hoc* research can treat the issue adequately.

2.2. From Party Membership to Party Activism: How Specific Is the Rational Identification Model

An opportunity to test the scope of these findings is given by the «Survey on Social Mobility and Education in Italy». Although designed for other purposes, this large survey includes items which can be held to operationalize the Baseline and the Rational Identification models of the origins of political ambition²³. On the one hand, all the background variables (including "incomplete control of the main resources of social mobility" and excluding "place of residence") are identical. On the other, we can assume that "father's political interest" (Likert scale), "acquaintance with a politician" (binary), and "volume of social capital" (indicated by the "frequency of invitation by friends" on a Likert scale) constitute reasonably good proxy variables respectively for "political activism of relatives", "existence of a long-standing tie with a politician", and "volume of social capital"²⁴.

Seemingly, no one in the Social Mobility survey works in a political organization or holds a public office. However, some are party members; the degree of the respondents' political interest is also recorded. Among the young respondents there are 115 party members, 60 of whom said that they were "quite to very much" interested in

²³ Unfortunately, however, the survey does not make it possible to contrast the Baseline and the Rational Identification models with the others that have been discussed.

²⁴ A more detailed description of the variables included in the models of table 2 is in appendix C.

politics. The first group (young party members) represents the grass-root population from which the young party cadres and leaders are drawn; the second group (young party members with political interests) are a category of party members likely to be more active and to have some political ambition. Compared to the politically apathetic youth, these two groups constitute progressively narrower pools of eligibles to party offices.

To what extent does the Rational Identification model explain these two degrees of low-level party militancy? Were it fully able to account for grass-root militancy, the model would not be one of political ambition. Were it entirely unable to account for the basic forms of participation which are preliminary to deeper political involvement, the scope of the model would have to be limited to the specific case of activism in party youth organizations.

Table 2: Logistic regressions predicting "simple" party membership and "active" party membership

Independent variables	"Simple" Party Membership		"Active" Party Membership	
	(b)	SE (b)	(b)	SE (b)
Gender = male	.165	.108	.319	.184
Occupation = full-time job	.360	.160	.100	.218
Family Class = I-II	-.551	.349	-1.007	.585
Family Class = III	-.385	.188	-.618	.319
Father's Education = univ. degree	-.044	.418	.112	.605
Mother's Education = univ. degree	-.060	.583	.425	.664
Father's Political Interest	.515*	.120	.866*	.186
Acquaintance with Politician	.617*	.118	1.094*	.270
Volume of Social Capital	.195	.108	.513*	.172
Incomplete Control of SM Resources	.036	.114	.058	.187
Constant	-5.226*	.711	-8.115*	1.026

N = 1,438

* P < .01

In fact, neither of the two prospects is true. Table 2 shows that the politicization of the family of origin and some personal linkage with professional politicians are better predictors of "simple" party affiliation than social background. In addition to these variables, "active" party membership is significantly accompanied by a more intense social life. The odds that a respondent is an "active" member of a party are 9.52 times greater for those whose fathers had «much interest» in politics than for those whose fathers had «no interest» in politics, 2.99 times greater for those who «do» know a professional politician personally than for those who «do not», and 8.35 times greater for those who are invited by friends «more than once a week» than for those who «never» are²⁵.

Yet, these factors form no more than a part of the Rational Identification model, according to which a key element in ambition-building is an "incomplete control of the main resources of social mobility" - educational achievements and family jobs (cf. § 1.5). This factor has no effect either on "simple" or on "active" party membership of young people. Hence, the incomplete control of the main resources of social mobility is not at the basis of these elementary forms of political participation, but only of

²⁵ Logistic coefficients indicate «the change in the log odds of being in the category of interest [here, an "active" party member] on the response for a one-unit increase in the jth predictor [i.e., independent variable], controlling for all other predictors in the model» (Demaris 1992, 46). From log odds we have first derived the odds of being an "active" party member associated with different values of the independent variables, and then calculated how much these odds increase by passing from the lowest to the highest values of the significant independent variables.

more vital commitments to political life as those of top activists in party youth organizations. Although all the factors examined so far - father's political interest, acquaintance with a politician, volume of social capital - smooth the way towards some political involvement, they do not result in a career-oriented activism unless the young individual has relatively unbalanced opportunities of status attainment. Only possessing a good educational record but no easy access to a job, or the reverse, adds to "active" party membership a motivation to seek to live off politics.

Table 3: Logistic regression predicting control of a high volume of social capital (respondents "invited by friends more than once a week")

Independent variables	High Volume of Social Capital	
	(b)	SE (b)
Gender = male	.111	.147
Occupation = full-time job	.085	.186
Family Class = I-II	.834*	.231
Family Class = III	.179	.218
Father's Education = university degree	.115	.283
Mother's Education = university degree	-.643	.551
Incomplete Control of SM Resources	-.045	.150
Father's Political Interest	-.282	.190
Acquaintance with Politician	.445*	.175
Acquaintance with Politician by Family Class I-II	.070	.172
Constant	-2.723*	.649

N = 1,479

* P < .01

In the main, the analysis confirms the view that the Rational Identification model seems to cover different stages of commitment to politics (cf. figure 2 in this chapter). Additional evidence (table 3) strengthens the hypothetical causal chain according to which a connection

with a politician contributes to amplifying the whole social life of young people²⁶. The significant effect of this connection on respondents' social capital - net of all other effects - is likely to describe a process of progressive "absorption" of politicians' social capital by some of their young associates.

Table 3 also reveals that an upper class origin enhances social capital more than being acquainted with a politician²⁷. Yet, the introduction of an interaction term of "upper class origin" and "acquaintance with a politician", whose effect is not significant (last row of table 3), proves that these two determinants do not cumulate normally. Thus, they tend to be factors of production of social capital which are independent from each other. There are young people who control a larger than average personal network *thanks to their class position*, and others who have an equally larger network *thanks to their association with a politician*. The latter are those individuals who are most likely to develop a stronger involvement in political activities.

²⁶ As might be expected, a logistic regression of the variable "acquaintance with a politician" shows that causality goes both ways: a more intense social life also increases the probability of knowing a politician.

²⁷ The impact of an upper class origin on the volume of social capital fits with Homans' (1950, 182) assertion that «the higher a man's social rank, the larger will be the number of persons who originate interaction for him», and subsequent empirical evidence (Campbell et al. 1986, 109; contra, Verbrugge 1977). This may reflect a stronger class cohesion at the top of the social structure (as elitists postulate) which takes place through the «transubstantiation» of capital (as Bourdieu calls it). This hypothesis cannot be tested here, since the recipients of respondents' relationships are unknown.

Empirical results give substantial support to the hypothesis that, to become aspiring politicians, the young need a combination of processes of identification and of calculations of opportunity. Processes of identification have an impact on political participation in general: entering a party is largely influenced by long-standing links to significant others who are in turn politically active. Yet a party office, which is a costly involvement almost only rewarded by some opportunity to move upwards politically, is most likely to attract those who also have some assets for status attainment but not enough of these to be sure of succeeding in their professional future, either because they lack family-based career prospects, or because they have had a mediocre school record. Politics, in sum, is an attractive career for the young person who combines political identification with a significant other, who may work as a role model but also as a resource provider, and uncertain alternative professional opportunities²⁸.

²⁸ The Rational Identification model is potentially applicable to the understanding of other processes of career choice. Existing research, in particular, suggests that it might bear some validity in different social fields - such as becoming a terrorist (Della Porta 1992, 273), entering direct selling corporations (Biggart 1992, 27-8), advancing to managerial positions in large high-tech firms (Burt 1992, 74-6 and 164-6). The cases of intergenerational transmission of a family business also fit with the model.

3. *The Rational Identification Model and the Political System*

Our long journey through the data brings us finally to discuss a number of implications of the main results of this study. Although the Rational Identification model describes an individual-level phenomenon, this is of course related to general features of the political system. In order to place the micro model in a macro context, three main findings shall be again taken into account and discussed in the following concluding sections: the importance of *sponsorship* (§ 3.1) and of a *high volume of social capital* (§ 3.2), and the relative unimportance of *psychological traits* (§ 3.3) in the making of political ambition.

3.1. *Political Sponsorship and Its Consequences*

The crucial role of sponsors (who are usually relatives) in the early phases of political recruitment indicates the persistence of an «aristocratic tendency», as Mosca called it, in a political system: the political class can reproduce itself through generations.

Few refer to «aristocratic» and «democratic» tendencies in current political analyses. This distinction seems to be more successful in another field, that of the sociology of education, with Turner's (1960) contrast between «sponsored» and «contest» systems of school selection. These constitute substantially a rephrasing of Mosca's types, but they add to the elitist framework the important idea that selection

systems reflect the norms for upward mobility prevailing in different national cultures:

«In a selection system which follows the contest mobility norm, selections are delayed and individuals are allowed complete freedom for mobility through most of their careers. [...] In a selection system which follows the sponsored norm, individuals are selected for their ultimate careers very early, and departures from these early assigned careers are not permitted. Those who are selected for elite status are maximally separated from others, given specialized training and socialization, and guaranteed that they, and only they, will attain elite status» (Rosenbaum 1986, 142).

This can occur in the political as well as in the educational system. When *personal sponsorship* is necessary to enter active politics with some career ambition, as we have found here, the political system is pervaded by a «sponsored mobility» norm.

The family is central to this process. If it is always true that «without family there could not be any strategy of reproduction» (Bourdieu 1994, 11), this seems even truer in «sponsored mobility» systems. In this respect, our finding coincides with that of a study conducted about three decades earlier in Britain (the national paradigm of «sponsored mobility» for Turner):

«The principle of family succession is what emerges most clearly among the young activists of all parties. Four out of five young activists come from families with a record of political activity» (Abrams-Little 1965, 330)²⁹.

²⁹ A similar result was obtained by a large comparative inquiry of the 1970s reporting that «58 percent of the European politicians [had] relatives actively involved in politics or government», almost twice as much as in the U.S. sample (Aberbach et al. 1981, 73).

More specifically, the youth party activists examined here are the sons, nephews, grand-children, and cousins of *second-rank* political office-holders. In this case, party elites recruit from their "doorsteps", not necessarily from within their homes.

This is consistent with the evidence showing an apparently high intergenerational mobility of the Italian political class (Schizzerotto 1993, 34). Social mobility studies tend to ignore that, even in the absence of a «transmission of status», there is a strong «transmission of *situs*» in the making of political ambition among the younger cohorts³⁰. Young party activists are the offsprings of elders who are involved in politics, though not necessarily in the foreground³¹. Recruitment of these politicians-to-be seems to be an instance of what Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame (1988, 22-3) deem the most typical process of intergenerational transmission: «transmission in an equivalent form»: instead of being passed onto their heirs as they are («transmission in an identical form»), the resources of parents create the heirs' «conditions for action». The politically active kin controls political ties through which relationships with more powerful potential mentors, and hence political recruitment, are made possible.

³⁰ Bertaux (1994, 91) holds that «ce phénomène de transmission du *situs* est, croyons-nous, d'une portée plus générale encore que celui de la transmission du *status social*».

³¹ This does not exclude the existence of a more specific cause of the intergenerational mobility of the Italian post-war political class: the demise of a whole generation of politicians at the break-up of the Fascist regime (Schizzerotto 1993, 34).

In contemporary societies this indirect dynamic of transmission is probably more common and legitimate than a strategy of direct father-to-son succession.

The dichotomy of political selection systems which was mentioned above therefore needs to be revised. Even within a formally democratic framework there is room for marked variations in recruitment practices. A more analytical classification ought at least to include four types of situations, from a maximum to a minimum of openness: the «aristocratic tendency» can take a *sponsored-dynastic* or a *sponsored-enlarged* form; the «democratic tendency» can manifest itself as *contest-unbalanced* or *contest-egalitarian*³².

For the importance of ascriptive ties, Italy belongs to the sponsored type; but because of the complex configuration of conditions which add to family politicization, Italy does not fall within the dynastic subtype. Its "tempered nepotism", so to speak, makes the Italian case a good example of a *sponsored-enlarged* system of political recruitment.

³² If the intergenerational transmission of the political profession were to reflect national patterns of occupational inheritance, as is possible but cannot be verified on the basis of the existing evidence, at one extreme of this four-fold typology we may find India, where 93% of sons take up their fathers' job, and at the other Sweden, where no more than 13% of sons have the same occupation as their fathers (Ganzeboom et al. 1991, 286; cf. also Treiman-Yip 1989, 390).

What *consequences* follow? If «the ultimate significance of various kinds of eligibility and selection lies in their system consequences» (Seligman 1971, 1; cf. also Weber's motto at the beginning of the thesis), how does the recruitment pattern described in the preceding pages matter?

Conclusions in this respect revolve around the point that, as all ascriptive criteria in public affairs, the sponsored system of recruitment is neither egalitarian nor efficient. Opportunities are not fairly distributed; and optimal candidates are possibly kept out from political offices³³.

To defend sponsored recruitment, it is said to prepare new entrants to elite positions³⁴. Through this system, «selections occur as early as possible so that the system can maximally benefit from the efficiencies of specialized training and socialization» (Rosenbaum 1986, 142). The argument is based on a Platonic premise: leadership can be taught. Good government depends on good training of the governors. As is well known, Popper was highly critical of this contention³⁵, which moreover seems very hard to test empirically.

³³ Usually, left-wing scholars evoke the first problem; right-wing authors the second.

³⁴ According to Bobbio (1996, 195), such an argument underlies Mosca's appreciation of the (partial) persistence of the aristocratic tendency in modern society.

³⁵ The philosopher's position against specialized training for political elites, regarded as an antecedent of a «closed society», is condensated in an aphorism: «The 'Man Friday' of the party leader is seldom a capable successor» (Popper 1966, I, 135).

Perhaps sponsored recruitment can be better defended on the grounds that it prevents conflicts among too many candidates for power positions. Even if one admits that contest recruitment constitutes an ideal procedure for the best men to emerge, the competition that it entails would by itself be damaging for the polity. Defending such an argument, Gibbon attributed the decline of the Roman empire to the decadence of the principle of heredity. Although the hereditary monarch is likely not to be the wisest,

«The superior prerogative of birth, when it has obtained the sanction of time and popular opinion, is the plainest and least invidious of all distinctions among mankind. The acknowledged right extinguishes the hopes of faction, and the conscious security disarms the cruelty of the monarch» (Gibbon 1952, I, 69).

As a corollary, a full meritocracy - namely, a perfectly contest-egalitarian recruitment system - would probably provoke an epidemic of unbearable frustration, as losers would be deprived of any illusions about their real capacities (cf. Goldthorpe 1994).

Sponsored systems of recruitment are probably more widespread than the egalitarian rhetoric suggests; indeed, they are more evident and no less dangerous in the economic world. Such systems undoubtedly conflict with the principle of equality, but it may be argued that they promote social stability³⁶. Whether equality or stability is to be preferred remains a value judgment, however.

³⁶ While the consequences in terms of inequality are easily demonstrable (evidence was given in chapter VI of this study), the consequences in terms of stability are not. Problems begin with the definition of the concept. Perfect equality may consist of an equal representation of

3.2. *Social Capital, Patronage, and Political Careers*

That the average Italian young party activist is in contact with more than five hundred people attests to the fact that in Italy *social capital is not an outcome but a pre-requisite for a political career*. But what is this large volume of acquaintances for? Is it the basis of clientelism³⁷?

Clientelism is probably not the appropriate concept. In fact, the tendency «to set Italy apart, to put it [...] outside the group of cases which inform much of comparative political theory building» is particularly manifest in «the application of the term "clientelism" to practices which often look suspiciously like constituency or "pork-barrel" politics» (Lange 1980, 2 and 1; in more general terms also Lemarchand 1981, 7-8)³⁸. While it is true that Italian politicians (including the younger ones) are at the centre of a wide network of social exchanges, they tend to do so in a pragmatic manner, giving rise to what Eisenstadt and

social categories among political participants; what perfect stability in a political system would be is unclear.

³⁷ Research on clientelism recognizes that patronage relations are an «elusive» subject of direct observation and measurement (cf. Landé 1983, 441-3). Indirect indicators are normally adopted, such as the use of preference votes or the number of invalidity pensions in some areas.

³⁸ The misuse of the "clientelism" label in Italy is perhaps due to the massive pre-existence of patron-client relationships in rural and under-developed areas of the country. This is likely to have brought about an over-sensitivity to particularism among observers (cf. Eve 1993). Yet, while patronage tends to be based on instrumental relationships, clientelism implies «that the obligations to protection and allegiance of patrons and clients respectively are not specific and not limited to some spheres of social behaviour, but cover all the aspects of it. [...] The exchange relation goes beyond the instrumental concession of favours, and it is strongly affective» (Catanzaro 1979, 79-80).

Roniger (1984, 184-5) have called «addendum-like clientelistic relations» parallel to «universalistic modes of generalized exchange». Rather than patrons, Italian politicians appear closer to the political «bosses» portrayed by Weber (1948, 109-10)³⁹.

In this respect, Italy is not likely to be a very special case. Depurated of the deference of traditional patrimonialism, particularist exchanges turn out to be quite a normal feature of contemporary democracies (Roniger 1994). Some even argue that

«to the extent that the public domain is shrinking and the state correspondingly retreats from the purview of civil society, then the scope for the private appropriation of public resources together with the network building it both requires and expresses - in short, the scope for patronage-type behaviour - is bound to increase» (Theobald 1992, 190-1).

A similar diagnosis is sketched out by researchers who report the advent of a new type of political party in the Western world - the «cartel party» - in which goals «become more self-referential», activism «a profession in itself», membership reduced and «atomized» (Katz-Mair 1995, 19-21). By virtue of the emerging «interpenetration of party and state», party officers would also have «gained increasing access to patronage resources» - significantly, «the most

³⁹ The transformation of "old" patron-client relations has long been detected in Italy and qualified as the emergence of «mass», «horizontal», «bureaucratic», or «party-directed» clientelism (Tarrow 1967; Allum 1973; Caciagli 1977; Graziano 1973 and 1980; Gribaudi 1980; Chubb 1981; Walston 1987). Among these authors, yet, only Caciagli (1977, 113-4) feels the need to refer to the Weberian concept of bossism, even though he finds the term "manager" more adequate. Terminological differences also probably reflect nuances of relationships at different times and places of investigation.

obvious illustration [being] provided by the Italian case» (Mair 1995, 52-3).

Even if the insulation of political life from the public's interest on which the persistence of patrimonialism is ultimately predicated by both Theobald and Mair were not to increase, there is a fundamental reason why politicians would resort to large personal networks: the very nature of democracy as a market for votes. In any democratic system, the establishment of personal relations (preliminary to exchanges) between citizens and politicians may *seem* rational to both. Through these relations of potential or actual exchange, citizens aim to maximize the value of their ballot and politicians to pre-empt consensus. Thus, not even the coming of a more affluent and universalist society can undermine the rationality of patronage at the individual level (although collective outcomes are clearly sub-optimal).

There can be, however, institutional constraints to patronage. Namely, the co-presence of *majority* voting, *large* constituencies, and *weak* parties can make the cost of political networking too high for the ordinary political aspirants. To a substantial extent, these three conditions have been fulfilled most recently in Italy⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ In 1993, the main political leaders of the country began to be sued and delegitimated, and the traditional parties to break up. These events first favoured the introduction of a new electoral system (mostly majority voting), and subsequently, in 1994, the election of a Parliament with newly formed parties and an unprecedented number of novices (71 per cent).

The change of the electoral system seems to have altered the hierarchy of the political resources for election. With the proportional system and the multiple preference vote, social capital was most useful in securing a certain number (not necessarily very high) of "safe" votes by means of patronage, and in swapping preference votes with other candidates on the list. Candidates who were most able to form alliances with other candidates in order to exchange each one's preference votes were prized. Conversely, a higher consensus is necessary for election with the majority system. In no constituency can a seat be obtained with less than 20,000 votes - a number of people that is difficult to win over with clientelistic methods alone⁴¹. Therefore, mass-scale political marketing and campaigns have a stronger impact. Economic capital counts more, social capital less. The entry into Parliament of a markedly larger share of employers and business owners (doctors, lawyers, and so on) and the reduction of political professionals⁴² among Italian MPs (from 61.2% in 1992 to 31.9% in 1994) seem to indicate that money has become more important in the political

⁴¹ Essentially because of time, there is an upper limit to the number of social ties that any individual (and political brokers as well) can manage. Personalized political machines (with functionaries and sub-leaders) capable of managing thousands of relations indirectly may be a solution. In practice, such machines might be less productive than direct networking and, most of all, require something more than professional dedication: money.

⁴² MPs are considered to be 'political professionals' if they have no alternative occupation, if they have been elected in the last three legislatures, or if they have been mayors or regional councillors for the last 15 years without interruption. Different operational definitions underlie the classifications in Mastropaolo (1994) and Verzichelli (1994).

recruitment of parliamentary candidates, much as is the case in other political systems based on majority voting (such as Britain and France)⁴³.

Inasmuch as selection systems reflect value structures that lie at the core of a culture, the transformation of which follows the rhythms of the *longue durée*, the political ambition of the younger aspirants in the Italian system may continue to stem from a personal resource transfer dominated by family ties. However, inasmuch as institutional constraints such as voting systems affect political behaviour, the hierarchy of the relevant resources may change - with a possible decrease of the importance of social capital.

3.3. *Politics Is Not a Vocation*

Most political men seek to create an image of themselves as originally spurred by an inner vocation for politics. In societies in which political participation and interest are low, a large part of the public is likely to lack the competence and the arguments to discuss this claim. "Politicians are where they are because they were born with a politician's mind" is how the governed often come to see political recruitment.

⁴³ In Britain and France usually about two fifths of the parliamentarians are business owners (Mastropaolo 1993, 82-6). In particular, among the elected with majority voting in the Italian Chamber of Deputies of 1994, 35.3% are business owners, while they are only 20.6% among the elected with proportional voting. I thank Luca Verzichelli for these figures.

Against such a simplistic yet popular view, this study has shown that structural opportunities more than personality traits condition entrance into politics at a young age⁴⁴. The control of salient and specific social resources makes political ambition an essentially rational career decision. This conclusion probably goes beyond the boundaries of our research focus. If being politically active is a rational choice even in almost uninfluential offices such as those of party youth organizations, so should it be in more powerful and rewarding political positions. With very rare exceptions⁴⁵, thus, "political calling" seems to be a myth: the formula by which a widespread tendency to psychologism is applied to politics in a secularized society⁴⁶.

Such a potential tendency does no good to democracy. Indeed, psychologism as a way of interpreting political actions is not only unjustified, but it may even be dangerous as it instills the feeling that democracy relies on special kinds of men. When circumstances wipe away this feeling, the loss of trust in politicians reverberates on the trust in the polity. The legitimacy of the political

⁴⁴ Of course, this is no guarantee that prospective politicians will not develop abnormal personalities later in their career.

⁴⁵ It must be clear that our treatment of political ambition covers the normal situation of young people entering politics, not the emergence of exceptional and charismatic leaders. For them psychological models are probably better suited.

⁴⁶ Psychologism is defined as «the theory that society depends on the "human nature" of its members» by Popper (1966, I, 84), according to whom the term was coined by Husserl (*ibid.*, II, 323). An important indicator of the success of psychologism as popular *Weltanschauung* is the rise of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century (Gellner 1985).

system may suffer because of the unexpected disillusionment with political leaders.

On the contrary, when political careers are viewed as routine, the public can read the motives of their representatives' behaviours more realistically. While this realism may reduce political satisfaction, it certainly prevents risky disillusionments. If we know that we are governed by professionals who have their own interests, we can keep our eyes open. If we are aware that going into politics does not depend on "God's blessing" but tends to be of a more mundane choice, we can more easily preserve the critical attitude which lies at the heart of the democratic spirit.

APPENDIX A

THE PERSONAL NETWORKS OF YOUNG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS AND NONACTIVISTS

1. Collecting Network Data

In the context of this study, the concept of 'personal network' has been used to refer to the subjectively significant social relationships which define the boundaries of any individual's unique «world of the fellow-men»¹. As in all social network literature, personal network data consist of «a focal actor, termed ego, a set of alters who have ties to ego, and measurements on the ties among these alters» (Wassermann-Faust 1994, 42).

The first problem in social network research is that «the task of identifying network members is not so simple as asking respondents "Who do you know?"» (Campbell-Lee 1991, 204). Indeed, «to bound a setting is to introduce the arbitrary» (White 1992, 72)². Many strategies to define

¹ This concept is illustrated by Schütz when tracing his outlook on social reality: «The social world contains a domain characterized by the immediacy of my experience of others. Human beings in this domain are my fellow-men; they share with me a common sector of space and time» (Schütz 1976, II, 22).

² Any personal network may appear endless, since it is composed of the actors' social ties, of the ties of their ties, and so on. This ought not to eliminate the need to simplify reality somewhat. In sociology, the point was brilliantly exposed by Sorokin (1962, 5), who noted that «theoretically the existence and behavior of any individual influences to some infinitesimal degree those of all other individuals. However, this admission does not hinder the existence of different degrees of functional dependence between various individuals, beginning with the closest dependence, in which two or more individuals are bound by such a short "rope" that every action of one of them affects the action of the

operationally the boundaries of personal networks have been proposed. Pioneer studies on social networks were based on respondents' enumeration of their «three best friends» (Laumann 1973) or the «six persons outside your home that you feel closest to» (Wellman 1979). A different strategy was introduced by McAllister and Fischer (1978), who began to operationalize personal networks on the basis of multiple name generators referring to specific social exchanges: questions about the people with whom respondents discuss and do different things together. This method was also adopted and expanded in network research on social support (cf. Tardy 1985; Wellman-Wortley 1990)³.

However, «discussion» is usually taken as the stimulus object. A standard point of reference is the network items included in the 1984 American General Social Survey (GSS), which asked with whom a respondent had «discussed matters important to him/her within the past six months» (Burt 1984; Campbell et al. 1984). This operationalization is convenient on many grounds, but questionable on others. «Discussion» can be a poor indicator for detecting «significant others». Personal attachments are not contingent on talking about certain topics - because talking about these is felt unnecessary or not interesting. Interactions with close associates rely on shared presuppositions, giving rise to

others [...], and ending with such a remote and intangible dependence that it cannot be noticed and therefore is practically non-existent».

³ Affective networks are also to the fore in social psychology, but they are dealt with under the label of 'close relationships', for the measurement of which a number of alternative operationalizations has been devised (cf. Berscheid et al. 1989).

truncated and often unverbale exchanges which do not fit the ordinary meaning of 'discussion' (Gumperz 1982, 71-2). «Discussion» has therefore not been used as name generator of significant network ties in this study⁴.

Name generators reflect *affective exchange*, or *specific exchange*, or *interaction*, or *role relations* (van der Poel 1993b, 50-4). Although these four types of name generators are not mutually exclusive, as has been shown by Van Sonderen et al. (1989), to keep them separate seems most appropriate for analytical clarity. The method adopted here was the following. Three different contexts of interaction were referred to: a) that of the professional activity, b) that of the non-professional activities, c) that of the family (with reference to members interested in politics). The stress was on the *instrumental* nature of the «significant others» in the first context and on the *affective* nature of those in the second and in the third context.

The name generator for the professional context was: «Who are those individuals you find yourself more in touch with in your main activity [politics for activists, work-school for nonactivists]?». For selecting the more elective significant others in the non-professional context, the following question was asked: «With whom do you have intense

⁴ More satisfactory is the name generator used in another large national survey of personal networks: the German ALLBUS of 1990. Respondents were asked to «think about the three people with whom [they] most often come together on a private basis» (Wolf 1994, 454; italics added). However, this operationalization excludes any contact developed within work and public contexts - a quite significant slice of social life, at least for the purposes of the present study.

and enduring social relations?»⁵. The reconstruction of the family network, finally, was limited to a description of those family members who are more interested in politics, either because they participate in political activities or discuss politics with the respondent.

In addition, criteria based on *specific social exchanges* were used to select among personal network members a smaller number of social supporters with regard to «moral», «sentimental», «economic», and «work-related» problems (cf. chapter VI, § 2).

No upper limit to network size was predetermined. The interview routine even contained a probe eliciting more names in both contexts of interaction («Does anybody else come to your mind with whom you have been particularly close / you have a particularly intense relationship?»). For practical reasons, however, up to five names in each context were recorded. This threshold is higher than the norm in most network surveys (three persons). As 48.7% of the political activists felt the need to name up to five significant others in their professional context (37.6% among nonactivists in their job setting) and 47.8% in the non-professional (54% among nonactivists), personal networks were eventually larger than they had been recorded: yet,

⁵ Long-standing social ties proved to be the bulk of the relationships in the non-professional context of respondents' life: 89.7% of the members of the activists' and 92.8% of the members of the nonactivists' non-professional networks were known for two years or more. Since on average activists took their leading offices in the party some two years earlier, there seems to be an almost complete coincidence of the non-occupational network resulting from the interviews and the one which existed before entering active politics.

since memory is likely to select names in order of subjective importance, the core structure of the personal network is likely to have been captured by this procedure (cf. Freeman et al. 1987)⁶.

2. Organizing Network Data

Personal networks of the interviewed young activists and non-activists are described through different kinds of data:

- a. Attributes of the network members (e.g., age, gender);
- b. Attributes of the social relationship between the actor and each member of his network (e.g., «frequency», «duration»)⁷;
- c. Attributes of the relations of the network members among each other (i.e., «proximity»)⁸;
- d. Structural attributes of the personal network (i.e., «size», «density», «homophily»).

⁶ The highest number of possible ties recorded by means of the procedure used is fifteen (five in professional context, five in non-professional context, five in the family). According to White (1992, 76), «in all times and contexts [...] to focus on just the relations intense enough to persist indefinitely vis-à-vis ego, there seem to be around sixteen as a mode - in early societies all reckoned in a kinship frame, or in our own society dispersed over peer, kin, work, and neighborhood».

⁷ Among all the attempts to classify the attributes of social relationships (cf. Turner 1988), perhaps the most satisfactory for empirical research is that of Sorokin (1962, 1-23), which was therefore used in this study, the only substantial exception being the fusion of Sorokin's «orientation» and «catexis» in one single dimension of regulation of social exchanges. Five dimensions of social ties were taken into account in data gathering: a) «regulative orientation», b) «hierarchy» (Sorokin calls it «dependency»), c) «duration» (or «time length of the tie»), d) «frequency», e) «extension» (to one or more institutional contexts). The last dimension was operationalized as a characteristic of the whole set of relations included in the network (called «interconnectedness»).

⁸ These data were obtained from the respondents and might not reflect the reality of social relationships, but only how respondents perceive them. This is the relevant matter, however, since the focus is on the consequences deriving from respondents' interpretations of such relationships (cf. Krackhardt 1987).

This set of network data was divided into two files. The first file includes type a and type d data: respondents are cases, their attributes and those of their networks are variables. The second file includes type b and type c data: the ties forming each personal network are cases, the attributes of these ties are variables.

Social network research has several units and levels of analysis⁹. Relatively easy techniques of data integration with standard softwares (respectively, SAS and SPSS) are described in Wellman-Gonzalez Baker (1985) and Wolf (1994). The integration procedure used in the present study is conceptually equivalent to these; the only differences are due to the use of another statistical package (STATISTICA) for data management. Once integrated with attribute data in a standard matrix, computations with network items, as with all the other variables, were carried out with either STATISTICA or SPSS for Windows.

3. Activists and Nonactivists in Their Social Contexts: Differences of Personal Networks

Theoretically, social differentiation of ties and low density of personal networks can attest to the possibility of acting as a "bridge" among a variety of demands and interests, giving at the same time access to a wider range of resources (e.g., information, ideas, support). This point

⁹ A concise but bright description of the different levels of network data - individual, relational, and structural - is in Wellmann et al. (1991, 223-6; cf. also Wasserman-Faust 1989).

is explicitly connected to the «strength of the weak ties» and «structural holes» arguments (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992)¹⁰. The hypothesis that a sparser network of social relations enlarges the actor's scope of opportunities can be extended to political purposes. Inasmuch as «the prototypic politician engages in logrolling» (March-Olsen 1989, 30), personal networks can be regarded as «infraresources» of power (Rogers 1974) - resources to obtain resources¹¹. Having network members with different qualities and social positions may favour political activism, inasmuch as this gives access to diverse power resources and allows for in-between types of behaviour¹².

¹⁰ These alternative versions of the same theory affirming the importance of differentiated networks for various instrumental purposes - like getting a job, being promoted manager, or finding a home - has been positively tested by a number of studies (Lin et al. 1981a; Lin 1982; Campbell et al. 1986; Flap-De Graaf 1986; Lin-Dumin 1986; Lin 1988; Requena 1991; O'Regan-Quigley 1993; Burt 1992 and 1995; even before Katz 1958). Other authors consider such a theory to explain instrumental action among upper social strata only (Marsden-Hurlbert 1988; Wegener 1991).

¹¹ A 'power resource' can be defined as all that can work as the motivational basis for somebody's compliance with the actor. This definition is consistent with Nuttall et al. (1968, 352-3), Cartwright (1969, 152), Gamson (1970, 267), Rogers (1974, 1425), Bell (1975, 84), Burns (1978, 15-7), Lin (1982, 132).

¹² In a different direction, the low network density of political actors may also be interpreted in socio-psychological terms as a correlate of a trait of the political personality: «high self-monitoring» (Snyder-Smith 1986). People with this kind of trait «live in highly partitioned, differentiated, or compartmentalized social worlds in which they engage in specific activities with particular people. Further, their activity partners appear to be chosen because of the partners' skill, expertise, or specialization in specific activity domains. In addition, when close friendships do exist in the lives of high self-monitoring individuals, they seem to be with people who are themselves relatively high in self-monitoring. Moreover, this behavioral orientation toward choosing friends has its cognitive counterpart in the activity-oriented conception of friendship possessed by high self-monitoring individuals» (*ibid.*, 73-4).

3.1. Network Density and Interconnectedness

In network analysis density is usually defined as «the degree to which network members know one another apart from ties to ego» (Milardo 1986, 152). In operational terms, the density of a personal network consists of the number of *existing* relationships among network members divided by the number of the *possible* relationships among them. Only the presence or absence of these relationships are taken into account normally. On the contrary, actual ties are weighted here by the extent of their "proximity": the cases in which individuals in each possible dyad «do not know each other», «know each other but do not associate with each other», and «know and associate with each other» have been distinguished. Density, thus, can vary from 1 to 3 (1 when network members are unknown to each other, 2 when they know but do not associate with each other, 3 when they know and associate with each other).

Network members are more distant from each other in activists' non-professional networks than in nonactivists': the average density is 2.08 and 2.49 respectively. Seemingly, prospective politicians tend to choose associates who are not part of an established group, thereby forming the communication bridge among them.

Another measure of density was also provided. This is "interconnectedness", which corresponds to the extent of overlap of the three contexts of social relationships examined (professional, non-professional, and family). Respondents were asked to state whether most of the people they use to meet in one context are «unknown to» (-1),

«known to» (0), or «known to and met by» (+1) those whom they meet in any of the other contexts (tables 1-2). The scores were then summed to form a global index of interconnectedness.

Table 1: «What kind of relations are there between the bulk of the people you associate with in your professional context and the rest of your associates?»

	DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER	JUST KNOW EACH OTHER	KNOW AND MEET	Totals
NONACTIVISTS Row %	148 47.1%	114 36.3%	52 16.6%	314
ACTIVISTS Row %	70 60.9%	37 32.2%	8 6.9%	115
All Grps	218	151	60	429

Table 2: «What kind of relations are there between the bulk of the people you associate with in your free time/other activities and the rest of your associates?»

	DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER	JUST KNOW EACH OTHER	KNOW AND MEET	Totals
NONACTIVISTS Row %	33 10.2%	99 30.8%	190 59.0%	322
ACTIVISTS Row %	17 14.8%	56 48.7%	42 36.5%	115
All Grps	50	155	232	437

Only for 7% of the young activists does the bulk of their political associates mix with some of their associates in other contexts of life, such as family members or colleagues in other activities. Among the workmates of

respondents in the control group, this seems to happen in more than twice the cases. Similarly, only 36.5% of the young politicians (against 59% of the control group) state that the bulk of their non-professional network members knows and meets members of their networks from other settings. Interconnectedness is even lower among more powerful and older activists.

Whatever the measure used, to sum up, evidence shows that the more young people actively participate in political affairs, the more they will tend to separate their social relationships.

3.2. Homophily in Personal Networks

Embeddedness in a network of culturally similar significant others is likely to bring about pressures to identify with significant others' standards. This may facilitate political involvement, as it smooths the resistance to recruitment offers in groups which are consistent with these shared standards (Lane 1959, 108)¹³.

Methodologically, a basic distinction exists between the similarity of attributes and of attitudes. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954), introducing these two forms of social distance between associates, called them respectively

¹³ This hypothesis can be viewed as an extension of the "classic" network theory of voting of the Columbia school of electoral studies (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Sheingold 1973): the more consistent are an individual's significant others in their political choices, the more convinced he will be in adhering to such choices (cf. also Festinger 1954).

«status homophily» and «value homophily»¹⁴. Furthermore, the tendency to associate with most *different* others is to be distinguished from the tendency to associate with most *varied* others. The former refers to the dissimilarity between Ego and his Alters; the latter to the dissimilarity among Alters. For instance, if Ego is a man and his network is composed of two women, gender difference will be high and gender variety low.

Four types of indexes were thus created (figure 1). Indexes of status difference and variety were created as regards attributes: age, gender, profession, hierarchical position on the job. Indexes of value difference and variety were created as regards attitudes: dressing taste, opinion on abortion, vote preference¹⁵.

¹⁴ Lazarsfeld and Merton's path-breaking and unfinished research programme on these aspects of social relationships is rarely mentioned even in network research (for exceptions, Verbrugge 1977; Kandel 1978; Feld 1982; McPherson-Smith Lovin 1987). Implicitly, however, most network studies of social influence incorporate homophily in their explanations (for a review, Marsden-Friedkin 1993).

¹⁵ Mathematically these indexes correspond respectively to:

* Indexes of difference (in age, gender, profession, hierarchical status on the job, and in the various items of opinion) = $\sqrt{(\sum x - \sum Ax_i) / N \sum Ax_i^2}$; where x is Ego's value and Ax_i each Alter's value on the binary variable (see Friedkin-Cook 1990);

* Indexes of variety (in age, gender, etc.) = $sd Ax_i$, i.e. the standard deviation of Alters' values. For calculating the index of professional variety, Alters' occupations have been dichotomized as equal to Ego or different to Ego.

Figure 1: Forms and references of homophily in network composition

FORMS OF HOMOPHILY		REFERENCE	
		Ego-Alters	Alters-Alters
		Status Difference	Status Variety
	Status		
	Value	Value Difference	Value Variety

3.2.1. Status Difference and Variety of Personal Networks

How similar are the attributes of network members and those of respondents? In this section, similarity of gender, age and occupation in the non-professional contexts of social relationships will be examined. As will be seen, save some exceptions, prospective politicians fish their most intimate associates from different occupational and cohort pools.

Only the index of promiscuity (i.e., gender difference) reveals no difference between the two samples. Although in the networks of the political activists men are a large majority (86.8%), this is simply due to the larger proportion of men among activists themselves.

In contrast, the non-professional networks of activists include individuals of differing age: the index of age variety is 4.22 for activists and 2.63 for nonactivists. Activists' social relations are more likely to stand at the crossing of more generations.

Occupational homophily is also different in the two samples. Political activists have a higher number of friends who do the same job as they do (50.2% vs. 40.9% among

nonactivists). This is almost exclusively due to the associative behaviour of executives and professionals (i.e., employers, managers, lawyers). Among "ordinary" young people these categories are the most open toward people from different occupations: 89.9% of their friends have a different job. However, this is so only for 58.2% of the friends of the young executives and professionals who are politically active. More than the politically apathetic young entrepreneur or lawyer, the young entrepreneur or lawyer in politics is at the centre of a world of professional alter egos. Perhaps by selecting individuals from the same occupational milieu, upper status activists seek to play down their identity as politicians, which has a negative stigma in current culture (cf. chapter IV, § 1).

3.2.2. *Value Difference and Variety of Personal Networks*

In the social relations with significant others, «common values and strong personal attachments act both as cause and effect, modifying and in turn being modified by one another» (Lazarsfeld-Merton 1954, 36). However, such a process of cultural homogeneization at the micro level is always to some extent reduced by norms of tolerance and by curiosity for diversity (*ibid.*, 32-4). Therefore, personal networks do differ in terms of the level of opinion agreement of the members with Ego.

Three measures of cultural affinity are taken into account here: agreement on *dressing taste* (a basic element of the aesthetic dimension in youth culture), on *abortion*

best policy (a basic element of the ethical dimension), on vote preference (a basic element of the political dimension).

Table 3: Agreement between respondents and their associates on cultural issues (%)

	PROFESSIONAL TIES		NON-PROFESSIONAL TIES	
	NONACTIVISTS	ACTIVISTS	NONACTIVISTS	ACTIVISTS
DRESSING	53.8	46.3	65.2	57.0
ABORTION	71.8	78.9	77.2	79.3
VOTE	24.6	95.4	35.2	67.6
	N=417	N=1,089	N=404	N=1,288

On average, agreement on a moral issue such as abortion seems most important in developing and maintaining social ties: in all contexts of social relationships, both activists and nonactivists cannot stand to disagree with more than one quarter of their associates on average (table 3). Abortion is a most divisive issue in contemporary Western culture, and forms a real cleavage also among Italian young people: pro- and anti-abortists are almost equally represented in the two samples (57% and 43% respectively)¹⁶. What Dworkin (1993, 9) says of Americans can be said of young Italians: they find it hard «to learn

¹⁶ If «the war between anti-abortion groups and their opponents is America's new version of the terrible seventeenth-century European civil wars of religion» (Dworkin 1993, 4; cf. also Jaffe et al. 1981, 100-9), such a «clash of absolutes» (Tribe 1990) is no less acute in Europe, and particularly in Italy where even two highly controversial referendums were held in 1981. In the most radical of these referendums, 32% of the voters asked for a complete ban on abortion (Uleri 1994, 392).

to live together disagreeing about abortion as they disagree about other matters». Overall, discordance on moral values is the least bearable cultural difference in the social relations of the young respondents.

Activists have a much higher degree of agreement on voting with *non-political* associates than nonactivists¹⁷. Young politicians tend to have extra-political friends who are politically like-minded and vote as they do. The activists' social world is, so to speak, a single party system. This is also the case if only network members known before entering politics are taken into account: 62.3% of the friends of activists since the age of 16 cast the same vote (against 38.1% in the control group). As political apathy is often a strategy for muddling through conflicting loyalties with discording associates, finding oneself in a culturally uniform social world minimizes the risks of social frictions in taking a stance on politics. Possibly, political agreement with intimate friends may facilitate the choice to enter politics.

Value homophily also reflects party differences. In both contexts of their personal networks, young *Leghisti* disagree less on dressing styles, Young Communists on abortion, Young Christian Democrats on electoral choices. These variations may be due to long-lasting differences in party subcultures. The DC traditionally admitted a wide

¹⁷ The contrary was shown to be true in a survey of young members of voluntary groups (Sciolla-Ricolfi 1989, 30-1). This is probably one among many differences between activists of parties and of other kinds of associations.

spectrum of ideological positions among its members; such eclecticism was even perhaps the key of its electoral successes. The former Communist Party (currently PDS) functioned more as a "church" party and used to form a common culture in the social environment which it influenced: it had a clear say also on matters of private morality such as abortion. Finally, the *Lega Nord* emerged as the representative of a territorially concentrated but strongly rooted culture in which the material aspects of well-being, such as dress, are positively valued¹⁸.

¹⁸ Activists of the Northern League also show the highest degree of agreement with the relatives with whom they discuss politics on all three of the opinion items - abortion, vote, and dress.

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES INCLUDED IN THE MULTIVARIATE MODELS
OF THE CASE-CONTROL STUDY

	Nonactivists		Activists		Group difference ¹	
	Mean ²	Sd	Mean ²	Sd	t-value	Sig
<i>Gender (male)</i>	.44		.81		7.23	.000
<i>Occupation (student)</i>	.55		.63		1.36	.170
<i>Family Class II</i> (head of household in classes I or II of Erikson-Goldthorpe schema)	.10		.37		7.06	.000
<i>Family Class III</i> (head of household in class III of Erikson-Goldthorpe schema)	.23		.37		-2.95	.003
<i>Father's Education</i> (university degree)	.11		.31		5.36	.000
<i>Mother's Education</i> (university degree)	.08		.22		4.11	.000
<i>Place of Residence</i> (city, i.e. provincial capital)	.32		.52		3.90	.000
<i>Sense of Personal Control</i> (feels to master his future more than in adolescence)	.25		.13		-2.65	.045
<i>Sense of Group Belonging</i> (feels to be part of a united social group more than in adolescence)	.25		.55		6.09	.000
<i>Sense of Sociability</i> (feels to have more friends than in adolescence)	.53		.50		-.38	.703
<i>Sense of Consistency</i> (feels more coherent than in adolescence)	.54		.46		-1.47	.142
<i>Dogmatism</i> (index: cf. chap. V, § 3.2)	.03	1.02	-.09	.95	1.07	.283
<i>Attitudinal Consistency</i> (index: cf. chap. V, § 3.4)	-.06	.98	.17	1.04	-2.10	.036
<i>Politically Active Kin</i> (at least one family member or relative participates or participated in political life)	.02		.68		22.51	.000
<i>Complexity</i> (standardized number of opinion items for which a non-polar stance was expressed)	.04	1.03	-.14	.88	1.66	.098
<i>Availability of Reference Group</i> (working membership in culturally well-defined groups other than parties)	.06		.06		.07	.942
<i>Political Agreement with Long-standing Friends</i> (proportion of network friends known since the age of 16 or earlier who cast same vote as respondent)	.38		.62		-6.21	.000
<i>Political Agreement with Family Members</i> (proportion of family members who cast same vote as respondent)	.50		.71		-4.85	.000
<i>Prior Availability of Potential Political Mentor</i> (for nonactivists: knows a politician personally; for activists: at least one senior politician in network already known before entering the party organization)	.48		.96		9.92	.000
<i>Volume of Social Capital</i> (surnames in personal phone list under the 'D' letter)	4.88	4.23	16.69	16.40	-11.59	.000
<i>Incomplete Control of Social Mobility Resources</i> (Either "poor educational record" [stopped studying before university or still student without a university degree at 25 or more], or "lack of inheritable job" [none of parents is entrepreneur, autonomous professional, or self-employed])	.36		.55		-3.44	.001

¹ 95% confidence interval² Proportions for dummy variables

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES INCLUDED IN THE MULTIVARIATE MODELS
OF THE SOCIAL MOBILITY STUDY

	"Simple" Party Membership					
	Nonmembers		Members		Group difference ¹	
	Mean ²	Sd	Mean ²	Sd	t-value	Sig
<i>Gender (male)</i>	.49		.59		2.16	.031
<i>Occupation (student)</i>	.22		.13		-2.65	.025
<i>Family Class I-II</i> (head of household in class I or II of Erikson-Goldthorpe schema)	.09		.06		-1.32	.027
<i>Family Class III</i> (head of household in class III of Erikson-Goldthorpe schema)	.14		.08		-1.80	.072
<i>Father's Education</i> (university degree)	.06		.04		-1.05	.294
<i>Mother's Education</i> (university degree)	.03		.02		-.34	.732
<i>Father's Political Interest</i> (1-4 points scale)	1.61	.80	2.00	.99	-4.62	.000
<i>Acquaintanceship with Politician</i> (knows a politician personally)	.41		.73		7.10	.000
<i>Volume of Social Capital</i> (frequency of invitation by friends; 1-5 points scale)	2.42	1.01	2.57	.95	-1.50	.133
<i>Incomplete Control of Social Mobility Resources</i> (Either "poor educational record" [stopped studying before university or still student without a university degree at 25 or more], or "lack of inheritable job" [none of parents is entrepreneur, autonomous professional, or self-employed])	.38		.32		1.20	.230

	"Active" Party Membership					
	Nonmembers		Members		Group difference ¹	
	Mean ²	Sd	Mean ²	Sd	t-value	Sig
<i>Gender (male)</i>	.49		.65		2.00	.046
<i>Occupation (student)</i>	.22		.23		.19	.852
<i>Family Class I-II</i> (head of household in classes I or II of Erikson-Goldthorpe schema)	.09		.05		-.81	.420
<i>Family Class III</i> (head of household in class III of Erikson-Goldthorpe schema)	.14		.08		-1.10	.272
<i>Father's Education</i> (university degree)	.06		.05		-.12	.855
<i>Mother's Education</i> (university degree)	.02		.03		-.14	.893
<i>Father's Political Interest</i> (1-4 points scale)	1.62	.80	2.40	1.04	-5.82	.000
<i>Acquaintanceship with Politician</i> (knows a politician personally)	.41		.90		6.36	.000
<i>Volume of Social Capital</i> (frequency of invitation by friends; 1-5 points scale)	2.42	1.01	2.88	.85	-2.82	.005
<i>Incomplete Control of Social Mobility Resources</i> (Either "poor educational record" [stopped studying before university or still student without a university degree at 25 or more], or "lack of inheritable job" [none of parents is entrepreneur, autonomous professional, or self-employed])	.38		.33		.57	.568

¹ 95% confidence interval² Proportions for dummy variables

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE

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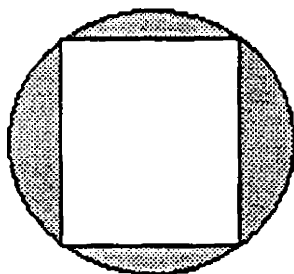
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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

QUESTIONARIO

La partecipazione politica dei giovani in Italia



Istituto Universitario Europeo

Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali

TABELLE DI CODIFICA

TABELLA ATTIVITA' POLITICA

Persona	Status	Anni	Età	Sesso	Prof	Int	Tipo	Abb	Aborto	Voto
A	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
B	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
C	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
D	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
E	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

TABELLA TEMPO LIBERO/ALTRE ATTIVITA'

Persona	Anni	Età	Sesso	Prof	Int	Tipo	Abb	Aborto	Voto
F	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
G	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
H	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
L	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

TABELLA FAMIGLIA

Persona	Status	Int	Tipo	Abb	Aborto	Voto
M	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
N	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
O	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
P	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Q	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

TABELLA DENSITA' POLITICA

A + B: []
A + C: []
A + D: []
A + E: []
B + C: []
B + D: []
B + E: []
C + D: []
C + E: []
D + E: []

TABELLA DENSITA' TEMPO LIBERO/ALTRE ATTIVITA'

F + G: []
F + H: []
F + I: []
F + L: []
G + H: []
G + I: []
G + L: []
H + I: []
H + L: []
I + L: []

ISTRUZIONI PER LA COMPILAZIONE

Il questionario che Ti sottoponiamo si compone di tre sezioni. Attenzione: le risposte alle domande della seconda sezione dovranno essere segnate nella "tabella di codifica" (di colore giallo) sul retro della copertina.

Prima di cominciare, una raccomandazione: non lasciare domande senza risposta, che possono pregiudicare la rappresentatività del campione. Buon lavoro!

PRIMA SEZIONE: DATI SOCIOBIOGRAFICI

1. In quale Comune hai vissuto più a lungo nella Tua infanzia (6-14 anni)?

2. In quale Comune vivi adesso?

.....

.....

3. Anno di nascita: 19.....

4. Sesso: M [] F []

5. Stato civile:.....

6. Nella famiglia in cui sei cresciuto, sei/eri?

- ☐ Figlio unico
- ☐ Primogenito
- ☐ Figlio di "mezzo"
- ☐ Figlio più piccolo

7. Quale titolo di studio hai conseguito?

- ☐ Licenza elementare
- ☐ Licenza media inferiore
- ☐ Licenza media superiore
- ☐ Laurea

8a. Hai un lavoro? Se sì, quale?

8b. Studi? Se sì, cosa?

9. Quale è/era la professione di Tuo padre?

10. Quale è/era la professione di Tua madre?

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. Quale titolo di studio ha/aveva Tuo padre?

- ☐ Nessuno
- ☐ Licenza elementare
- ☐ Licenza media inferiore
- ☐ Scuola professionale
- ☐ Licenza media superiore
- ☐ Laurea

12. Quale titolo di studio ha/aveva Tua madre?

- ☐ Nessuno
- ☐ Licenza elementare
- ☐ Licenza media inferiore
- ☐ Scuola professionale
- ☐ Licenza media superiore
- ☐ Laurea

13a. Puoi dirci se la maggior parte delle persone che frequenti nel tempo libero facendo politica:

- ☐ Non conosce i miei familiari
- ☐ Conosce i miei familiari, ma non frequenta casa mia
- ☐ Li conosce e frequenta casa mia

13b. Puoi dirci se la maggior parte delle persone che frequenti nel tempo libero o svolgendo altre attività extrapolitiche:

- ☐ Non conosce i miei familiari
- ☐ Conosce i miei familiari, ma non frequenta casa mia
- ☐ Li conosce e frequenta casa mia

14. In quale anno la politica Ti ha "conquistato" -si è cioè posta al centro dei Tuoi interessi? 19.....

15. Qual'è il tuo partito? 16. Quali incarichi politici ricopri in questo momento?

..... Nel partito o mov.:
..... In altre istituzioni:

17. Perché, a un certo punto della Tua vita, hai sentito di doverTi occupare di politica in prima persona?

.....
.....
.....
.....

18. Ti senti più cittadino (una risposta per colonna):

In primo luogo In secondo luogo

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| * della tua città | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| * della tua regione | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| * italiano | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| * europeo | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| * del mondo | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19. C'è stata qualche persona o evento in particolare che Ti ha incoraggiato a fare politica?

.....
.....
.....
.....

SECONDA SEZIONE: I CONTESTI SOCIALI

ATTENZIONE: La maggior parte delle risposte alle domande contenute in questa sezione del questionario devono essere segnate nella "tabella di codifica" sul retro della copertina.

TABELLA ATTIVITA' POLITICA

20. Far politica significa stare a contatto con persone che collaborano a un progetto comune, pur occupando posizioni diverse. Quali di queste persone Ti capita di frequentare anche al di fuori degli incontri del Tuo partito? Per favore indica le loro iniziali (o nomi di battesimo, o abbreviati) sotto la colonna PERSONA nella tabella ATTIVITA' POLITICA

21. E a quali persone che fanno politica, e che ritieni più importanti ed esperte, Ti capita di telefonare o di intrattenerti con una certa consuetudine per chiedere consiglio? Per favore aggiungi le loro iniziali (o nomi di battesimo, o abbreviati) sotto la colonna PERSONA nella tabella ATTIVITA' POLITICA

34. Nel complesso, le Tue attività comportano un contatto quotidiano col pubblico? *Indica qui sotto la risposta prescelta:*
[] Sì, per lo più sempre con le stesse persone [] Sì, per lo più con sconosciuti [] No

35. Ci servirebbe ora un indice standard di «sociabilità». Puoi essere così gentile da guardare la Tua agenda personale del telefono e contare quante persone ci sono sotto la lettera D? *Numero persone:*

TABELLA FAMIGLIA

36. In ogni famiglia c'è sempre qualcuno che si interessa di politica -in senso lato- più degli altri. Nella Tua famiglia, c'è qualche persona che ha ricoperto qualche carica civica, associativa e/o di pubblica rappresentanza? *Per favore indica il Tuo grado di parentela con costui (o costoro) sotto la colonna PERSONA nella tabella FAMIGLIA (ad es.: padre, zio, nonno, fratello, etc.)*

37. Qual'è la carica più importante che ha/nno ricoperto questa/e persona/e? *Per ciascun familiare indicato, scrivi sotto la colonna STATUS della tabella FAMIGLIA il numero che trovi qui sotto in corrispondenza al ruolo svolto:*

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 0. Semplice iscritto | 1. Incarico nel movimento giovanile | 2. Incarico di sezione |
| 3. Incarico nella fed. cittadina | 4. Direttivo locale del partito | 5. Direttivo naz.le del partito |
| 6. Segreteria naz.le del partito | 7. Amministratore comunale/prov.le | 8. Sindaco/presidente provincia |
| 9. Consigliere regionale | 10. Parlamentare | 11. Sottosegretario, ministro |
| | | 12. Altro (spec.: |

38. C'è qualcun altro nella Tua famiglia che, sebbene non faccia politica attiva, parla spesso con Te di politica? *Per favore aggiungi il suo/loro grado di parentela sotto la colonna PERSONA nella tabella FAMIGLIA*

39. Mediamente, con che frequenza vedi ognuno di questi familiari -cioè, ci parli, fate qualcosa insieme, semplicemente state vicini l'uno all'altro? *Per ciascuna persona, scrivi sotto la colonna INT nella tabella FAMIGLIA il numero corrispondente alla risposta che sceglierai nelle possibilità qui sotto indicate:*

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Più o meno ogni giorno, estesamente | 2. Più o meno ogni giorno, brevemente |
| 3. Circa una volta la settimana, estesamente | 4. Una volta la settimana, brevemente |
| 5. Più di rado, estesamente | 6. Più di rado, brevemente |

LE CARATTERISTICHE DEI LEGAMI SOCIALI

40. Come Ti regoli quando dai qualcosa (un bene, un servizio, un aiuto) a ognuna delle persone che hai inserito nella colonna PERSONA delle tre tabelle di codifica? Ci sono quattro possibilità:

1. Mi aspetto di ricevere in cambio quanto mi spetta per quello che dò o faccio, nei tempi e nei modi concordati
2. Mi aspetto che chi ho aiutato si sdebiti con me entro un certo tempo
3. Mi aspetto che mi sia riconoscente, anche se è impossibile ricordarsi e calcolare tutto quello che ciascuno di noi due fa o dà all'altro
4. Mi aspetto che si approfitti di me e cerchi di trarre vantaggio a mie spese

Segna nelle colonne TIPO di tutte e tre le tabelle il numero corrispondente al comportamento appropriato a ciascuna PERSONA

41. Pensa un attimo al modo di vestire di ciascuna persona che hai indicato. Puoi dirci se, in fatto di abbigliamento, avete gli stessi gusti? *Segna nella colonna ABB di tutte e tre le tabelle S = Sì o N = No*

42. Puoi dirci, per ciascuna delle persone che hai nominato, se pensi che sia d'accordo o meno con Te sulla migliore soluzione del problema dell'aborto? *Segna nella colonna ABORTO di tutte e tre le tabelle S = D'accordo o N = Non d'accordo*

43. Puoi dirci, per ciascuna persona che hai nominato, se pensi che abbia votato come Te alle ultime elezioni? *Segna nella colonna VOTO di tutte e tre le tabelle S = Sì o N = No*

Restano ora da riempire le due tabelle DENSITA' POLITICA e DENSITA' TEMPO LIBERO/ALTRE ATTIVITA', che sono fondamentali per una corretta analisi sociopsicologica.

44. Considera i rapporti che esistono fra le persone che frequenti facendo politica. Ci sono tre possibilità:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Non si conoscono | 2. Si conoscono ma non si frequentano | 3. Si conoscono e si frequentano |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Comincia a leggere le iniziali delle PERSONE A+B nella tabella ATTIVITA' POLITICA, pensa al loro rapporto e segna la risposta (1, 2, o 3) nella casella A+B nella tabella DENSITA' POLITICA; fai poi lo stesso per tutte le altre combinazioni (A+C, A+D, etc.) incluse nella tabella

45. Considera ora i rapporti fra le persone che frequenti nel tempo libero (o facendo altre attività extrapolitiche). Ci sono sempre tre possibilità:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Non si conoscono | 2. Si conoscono ma non si frequentano | 3. Si conoscono e si frequentano |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Comincia a leggere le iniziali degli individui A+B nella tabella TEMPO LIBERO/ALTRE ATTIVITA'; pensa al loro rapporto e segna la risposta (1, 2, o 3) nella casella A+B nella tabella DENSITA' TEMPO LIBERO/ALTRE ATTIVITA'; fai poi lo stesso per tutte le altre combinazioni (A+C, A+D, etc.) incluse nella tabella

46. La situazione economica di ognuno di noi è legata in qualche misura agli altri, e al rapporto con qualcuno in particolare (perché dà opportunità, aiuto, lavoro, denaro, etc.). Quali ritieni che siano per Te le persone più importanti sotto questo profilo? Segna qui la Tua scelta: PERSONA: PERSONA:

47. Qual'è la persona tra quelle indicate cui Ti rivolgeresti più volentieri nel caso di:

* un problema affettivo ->

* un problema politico ->

* un problema morale o religioso ->

* un problema di lavoro ->

TERZA SEZIONE: I VALORI

Qual'è la Tua opinione su ciascuna delle affermazioni che seguono, già sottoposte ad ampi campioni di giovani in altre indagini?

	Molto d'accordo	Un po' d'accordo	Incerto	Un po' in disaccordo	Molto in disaccordo
1. Sarebbe meglio che i lavoratori immigrati vivessero in quartieri a loro destinati, dove potrebbero trovarsi più a loro agio date le profonde differenze delle loro usanze.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Si deve sempre evitare di attaccare in pubblico chi crede nei nostri stessi ideali.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. In definitiva, il miglior modo di vivere è scegliersi degli amici e compagni che abbiano i nostri stessi gusti e le nostre stesse idee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Prima di dare il proprio giudizio su una data questione è meglio sentire cosa ne pensano persone di fiducia.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In un mondo come il nostro, solo le più profonde trasformazioni potrebbero migliorare realmente la situazione.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. L'obbedienza e il rispetto per l'autorità dovrebbero essere imparate presto nella vita.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. In via di approssimazione, la gente può essere divisa in due grandi classi: i deboli e i forti.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Troppa familiarità fra le persone, alla fine, può portare a una mancanza di rispetto.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Un amico resta un amico anche se, malauguratamente, si scopre che ha commesso un reato e viene condannato per questo.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. E' preferibile perdere la stima dei propri colleghi di lavoro che dei propri superiori.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Con quali delle seguenti opinioni sull'aborto Ti trovi più d'accordo?

☐ Ogni donna deve essere libera di decidere sui figli che sente di potere o non potere avere

☐ L'aborto deve essere possibile solo se ci sono forti rischi per la salute della madre o di malformazioni gravi del feto

☐ L'aborto è ammissibile in casi di grave situazione socio-economica della madre

☐ L'aborto non è mai ammissibile

Cosa è cambiato nella Tua vita rispetto a quando ancora non Ti occupavi attivamente di politica?

Sì, più di prima Come prima No, meno di prima

- * Le mie opinioni sono coerenti con un sistema di idee
- * Mi sento parte di un gruppo unito e con la sua identità
- * Ho molti amici
- * Le mie posizioni sui problemi sono nette
- * Il mio futuro, come quello del mondo, è incerto
- * Mi sento in sintonia con le persone che frequento

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Potresti descrivere succintamente i tuoi obiettivi politici principali?

A BREVE TERMINE:

A MEDIO TERMINE:

A LUNGO TERMINE:

Secondo Te, qual'è il problema principale dei partiti italiani oggi? E quali funzioni dovrebbe svolgere un partito politico nella società contemporanea?

.....

Un'ultima domanda: qual'è, a Tuo giudizio, il problema più grande dell'Italia di oggi e quale ne è la causa (o le cause)?

.....

Grazie infinite per la pazienza con cui hai voluto seguire tutte le istruzioni di compilazione. Il questionario è terminato. Ti preghiamo di rinviarlo il prima possibile tramite la busta preaffrancata in allegato, accludendo anche, eventualmente, le osservazioni personali che vorrai far presente e che saranno benvenute.

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